

SOME OF US ARE LOOKING AT THE STARS:  
JAPANESE WOMEN, HONG KONG FILMS, AND TRANSCULTURAL FANDOM

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For Michael,  
who has had a long “year, two at the most.”

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**Lori Hitchcock Morimoto**  
Some of Us Are Looking at the Stars:  
Japanese Women, Hong Kong Films, and Transcultural Fandom

This dissertation offers a historical materialist perspective on the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars that arose in the mid-1980s and peaked in the late 1990s. This fandom was unique among non-diasporic, transnational audiences of Hong Kong cinema for its female composition and its star-centeredness, which together constitute an alternative lens through which to comprehend the meanings and implications of transcultural media fandom. Employing contemporaneous fan-produced writing, film criticism, journalism, and promotional literature for films, media technologies, and transnational travel to Hong Kong in the reconstruction of its discursive surround, the dissertation interrogates the dialectical relationship between fan practices and subjectivities. Through examination of the media discourses that produced this fandom in the Japanese popular imagination, the material means by which fans pursued their interest in Hong Kong stars, and the intersection of fan affect and transnationally-situated experience, the dissertation makes the case for a pragmatics of transcultural fandom that accounts for not only its transnational socio-political context, but also the gender and popular/fan cultural contexts through which it was experienced and understood.

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## INTRODUCTION

### JAPANESE WOMEN, HONG KONG STAR(S)

January 28, 1997 – Osaka Festival Hall. Thanks to a fortuitous connection with a local ticket retailer, I had obtained front-row seats to the Osaka leg of Leslie Cheung’s 1997 World Tour. My companion, a widowed mother of three from the countryside, and I wound our way through a lobby crowded with fans buying “R.E.D. Mission”<sup>1</sup> postcards featuring Cheung’s visage, the proceeds of which were intended for the Hong Kong Children’s Cancer Foundation. As we made our way inside the auditorium and settled in our seats, I had the chance to observe some of my fellow fans: to the right, members of the unofficial Leslie Cheung Japanese fan club, *Tsubasa no kai*, were passing around photocopied lyric sheets with a Japanese transliteration of Cheung’s song “*Jui*” (Chase) in preparation for a little live karaoke; to my left, an elderly woman dressed in formal Japanese kimono sat quietly awaiting the start of the concert, hands folded neatly on her lap; behind me, a twenty-something disabled woman who had arrived by wheelchair was being helped to her seat by her mother. Less a congregation of spoiled ‘parasite singles’, meddlesome *obatarian*, oversexed *hitozuma*,<sup>2</sup> or any of the myriad personae assigned to women in the Japanese mass

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<sup>1</sup> “R.E.D. Mission” was Cheung’s charity project to raise funds for the Hong Kong Children’s Cancer Foundation, named after his 1995 album “Red.” R.E.D. stood for “Regain, Extend, Dream.”

<sup>2</sup> The term “parasite single” was coined in 1999 by Tokyo Gakugei University professor Yamada Masahiro in reference to the growing number of unmarried women and, to a lesser extent, men who had returned to their parents’ homes in their twenties to work while, arguably, pocketing their salaries for personal use. “*Obatarian*” refers to domineering middle-aged women; “*hitozuma*,” literally meaning “someone’s wife,” popularly refers to married women on the prowl for extramarital sexual liaisons.

media,<sup>3</sup> the mostly female audience gathered there that night embodied a cross-section of fans that was especially interesting for its diversity. Indeed, as one fraction of a group of Hong Kong star fans that had garnered no little attention within the Japanese mass media, this audience was extraordinary in its ordinariness.

In the context of the larger female fandom of Hong Kong popular culture<sup>4</sup> that thrived in Japan from the late 1980s through the end of the 1990s, these women represented a substantial departure from their depiction – by both proponents and critics of the phenomenon alike – as driven by “their modish and sophisticated tastes”<sup>5</sup> in Hong Kong stars and movies. While there were undoubtedly members of the audience who attended Cheung’s concert primarily on the basis of his well-known and critically acclaimed work in films such as Wong Kar-wai’s *Days of Being Wild* or Chen Kaige’s *Farewell, My Concubine*, the sheer effort involved in concert preparation and attendance on the part of Cheung’s fans – ranging from flier preparation (and transliteration) to the act of attendance by a wheelchair user in a country only beginning to embrace accessibility<sup>6</sup> – testified to the intensity of these women’s affective investment in the star.

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<sup>3</sup> The discursive containment of women by the Japanese mass media benefits from a wealth of terminology that singles out women as the exception to the (masculine) rule. For detailed discussion of such usage, see *Media ni kakareru josei zō* (Media depictions of women); Konno Minako (2000), *OL no sōzō* (Imagining Office Ladies); Takahashi Yūko (2002), ‘*Onna rashisa*’ no *shakaigaku* (The Sociology of ‘Femininity’).

<sup>4</sup> Because of the high degree of industrial crossover within Hong Kong media of the 1970s – 1990s – in which TV stars become movie stars become pop singers, and vice versa – I use the term “popular culture” to refer to the broad object of fan interest; however, since the majority of (non-Chinese) transnational fans come to Hong Kong popular culture through its cinema, fan reception of films and film stars remains the focus of this project.

<sup>5</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization*, 186.

<sup>6</sup> The last decade has seen a significant rise in awareness of issues of accessibility in public spaces, although this has been spurred not by a concomitant awareness of disability, per se, but by Japan’s growing population of outspoken (and inconvenienced) senior citizens.

In the context of the broader transnational fandom of Hong Kong cinema as well, the women assembled that night at Festival Hall equally constituted an anomaly, a fact which became clear within minutes of Cheung's appearance onstage. Throughout the course of his 1997 world tour, Cheung appeared in venues such as Vancouver, San Francisco, Sydney, and London: all locales boasting sizable Chinese populations. While it was only to be expected that the random non-Chinese fan would also attend, Cheung, like other Hong Kong performers appearing overseas, tailored his show to diasporic Chinese audiences familiar with his long singing career. The primarily Cantonese and Mandarin onstage repartee with which he was widely rumored to have entertained audiences at his Tokyo shows suggests that he had anticipated much the same in Japan. By the time he arrived in Osaka, however, Cheung had adjusted his banter for a predominantly Japanese audience by conversing in a mixture of English and Mandarin.<sup>7</sup> The last-minute addition of a reprise concert in June even saw a few Japanese phrases added to his repertoire, a practice that would become par for the course in subsequent stage performances by Hong Kong stars in Japan.<sup>8</sup>

If Cheung's Japanese audience diverged from his Hong Kong and Chinese diasporic fans, neither did it reflect the widely recognized global faces of Hong Kong

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<sup>7</sup> Cantonese, as a regional Chinese dialect specific to parts of Southern China and Hong Kong, commonly is not taught in Japan (although some fans have gone to pains to study it in specialized language schools); Mandarin language training is more accessible, due to its relative ease and widespread use in Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore, and increasingly in Hong Kong as well. Formal education in English begins in junior high school for most Japanese, and English generally is more familiar than both Mandarin and Cantonese.

<sup>8</sup> The content of Cheung's follow-up Japanese tour in June 1997 also reflected his growing awareness of a Japanese fan base that originated in his film work, as opposed to his music, in the addition of a long film-inspired musical sequence set against a backdrop of hanging banners featuring stills of Cheung in some of his most memorable movie roles.

film fandom. Neither diasporic nor recognizably ‘cult’, the female fandom embodied in Cheung’s audience that night was, first and foremost, “idol driven,”<sup>9</sup> more reminiscent of the teenaged fans of Japanese ‘Johnny’s’ boy-bands than the cinephilic connoisseurs of Hong Kong’s martial arts cinema. While certain charismatic action stars – Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li chief among them – have attained singular popularity throughout Hong Kong’s transnational film markets, Japan included, the Japanese female fandom that came into being in the 1980s and flourished in the 1990s centered overwhelmingly on the “multi-talents”<sup>10</sup> that rose from the ranks of the Hong Kong television and pop music industries to achieve cinematic success. Stars such as Chow Yun-fat, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Jacky Cheung, Leon Lai, Leslie Cheung, and Andy Lau, whose work during the 1980s and 1990s constituted some of Hong Kong’s most iconic films, were at the heart of an almost exclusively female Japanese fandom that numbered in the thousands by the late 1990s.<sup>11</sup>

### **Female Fans and the Problem of Pleasure**

To paraphrase Laura Miller, part of the importance of this phenomenon lies not in numbers, but in how these fans symbolize the ongoing redefinition of women

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<sup>9</sup> Chin, “Beyond Kung Fu and Violence,” 215.

<sup>10</sup> Darling-Wolf, “Virtually Multicultural,” 511.

<sup>11</sup> Given the grassroots nature of this phenomenon, the precise size of the fandom is difficult to ascertain. However, based on membership data from the Yumcha [Dim-sum] Club, a general fan organization sponsored by erstwhile Wong Kar-wai film distributor and financier Shinohara Hiroko under the auspices of her company, Prénom H, there were at least 12,244 card-carrying fans of Hong Kong cinema in Japan as of December, 1997 (Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express*, 528). The male publisher of a widely circulating Hong Kong film fanzine estimated that, based on subscription data, the fandom of Hong Kong cinema was at least 20,000 strong at its peak, although, given the editorial bent of the fanzine, this number likely included more male fans than the Yumcha Club.

in late capitalism.<sup>12</sup> Female fandom of popular culture icons is a practice so pervasive as to be considered a globally stereotypical feminine behavior, and one that historically has provoked varying degrees of social anxiety.<sup>13</sup> This is no less the case in Japan, where female star fans frequently find themselves ‘diagnosed’ in the press as suffering from maladies and disorders ranging from the sexual deviancy of early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Takarazuka fans<sup>14</sup> to the ‘Yonfluenza’ afflicting present-day fans of South Korean star Bae Yong-joon. Miller and Jan Bardsley, in their scholarship of what they term Japanese “bad girls,”<sup>15</sup> have compiled a list of their (attributed) characteristics that offers insight into contemporary media depictions of female fans. In particular, such girls “are scandalously visible,” “make too much money,” “push girlish behavior to extremes,” possess “out-of-control” bodies, and “do what they want to do.”<sup>16</sup> Miller and Bardsley speak here primarily of various transgressive iterations of Japanese school-aged female identity. Yet, this system of classification is equally reflected in mass media characterization of female fans ranging in age from teenagers to middle-aged women in its emphasis on the profligate consumption patterns of single, professional women, older women’s age-inappropriate interest in pop idol-style stars, and the violent physicality of both evinced in their screams, tears, and rushing bodies.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Miller, “Those Naughty Teenage Girls,” 226.

<sup>13</sup> See Miriam Hansen (1991), *Babel and Babylon*; Joli Jensen (1992), “Fandom as Pathology”; Nash & Lahti (1999), “Almost Ashamed to Say I Am One of Those Girls”; Daisuke Miyao (2007), *Sessue Hayakawa*; Lisa Bode (2010), “Transitional Tastes.”

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 146-7.

<sup>15</sup> Miller and Bardsley, *Bad Girls of Japan*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-11.

<sup>17</sup> Newspaper accounts of Bae’s first visit to Japan in 2004 were typical of such reporting; see “Yonsama’ futtō kuruma o sattō, fuan 10 nin kega, hoteru shomen ni sugata (Boiling-over ‘Yonsama’ fans rush his car, 10 fans injured, [he] appears outside his hotel), *Asahi Shinbun* (November 27,

Not only mass media, however, but academic scholarship as well reflect ongoing discomfort with the figure of the female fan. Over twenty years ago, Tania Modleski described critical antipathy towards feminized mass culture as one in which women, “denied access to pleasure, while simultaneously being scapegoated for seeming to represent it,”<sup>18</sup> have no recourse within a critical framework but to accept an “adversarial position”<sup>19</sup> towards popular culture. Indeed, particularly insofar as women “too have been oppressed by the specious good”<sup>20</sup> with which we are associated, much research on female fandoms in the intervening years has tacitly accepted this position, ascribing fannish resistances to prescribed sexual identities, gender expectations, and the machinations of increasingly transnational, profit-driven media conglomerates as a prerequisite to taking them seriously.<sup>21</sup> The result is that we are without a discourse through which to take seriously female fandoms that evince *no* explicit oppositionality, with the effect that such fandoms are critiqued on the basis of their complicity with hegemonic state and corporate institutions.

It is this attitude that characterizes Koichi Iwabuchi’s<sup>22</sup> seminal work on the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars in the 1990s. As characterized by Iwabuchi, these women’s unreflexive, and even deluded, consumption of male Hong Kong stars is “patently mediated,” arising not from authentic engagement with Hong Kong culture, but rather “from their desire to prove their modish and sophisticated

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2004), 39; Lucas Schwartzacher, “Korean Star Causes Frenzy,” *Variety* (Dec. 6-12, 2004), 26; Editorial, “Bae Yong-joon Syndrome,” *The Korea Herald* (November 30, 2004), n.p.

<sup>18</sup> Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure,” 163-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>21</sup> Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance*; Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*; Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women*.

<sup>22</sup> Japanese names typically follow a surname first, given name second order. Where no precedent for using Western ordering exists, I have followed Japanese custom.

taste.”<sup>23</sup> Within this calculus, fans may “wish to differentiate themselves from otherwise mass-mediated cultural ‘dupes’....[But] for all their attempts to distance themselves from the ‘mindless’ consumers of the mainstream, such fans are themselves a product of that very media.”<sup>24</sup> Here, resistance to the logics of late capitalism constitutes a kind of ‘good’ fandom, which these women fail to embody. Yet, in his own equivocal analysis of the broader implications of this fandom for how we understand the transnational flow and consumption of media, Iwabuchi inadvertently reveals the “*limits* of an adversarial position.”<sup>25</sup> Observing that “these Japanese fans seem less concerned with transforming their lives by actually leaving Japan or encountering cultural others in the form of non-Japanese men in real situations,” he notes that, nonetheless, women’s fandom of Hong Kong stars has “encouraged some of these women to become more critically aware of Japan’s experience of modernity and its imperialist history. A self-reflexive praxis thus marks their appreciation of Hong Kong’s distinctive cultural modernity.”<sup>26</sup> Even so, constrained by the very framework of resistance through which he seeks to understand this phenomenon, Iwabuchi ultimately concludes that “even if the nostalgic gaze on Hong Kong is replaced and fans see that ‘they’ are just as modern as ‘us’, just in a different way, it still cannot be denied that fans are reducing Hong Kong to a convenient and desirable Asian other in the process.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Iwabuchi, “Nostalgia,” 558.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 559.

<sup>25</sup> Modleski, “The Terror of Pleasure,” 162. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Iwabuchi, “Nostalgia,” 565.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 567.



I raise Iwabuchi's work on the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars for two reasons: first, it is representative of issues of the conceptualization of women's popular culture consumption that continue to plague fandom studies. Particularly where fandom enters into the transnational sphere, women's conflation with specious mass-mediated and commodified culture and, in particular, consumption is particularly pronounced. That is, if one discursive approach to women's fandom engenders fears that the domestic consumption of film and television entertainment will result in a "desperate vacuity"<sup>28</sup> on the part of spectators, the saccharine pleasures of transnationally-circulated corporate and state-sponsored media spark particular concern about the "pragmatic uses of media cultures...as resources for the enhancement of political and economic national interests, through the branding of national cultures."<sup>29</sup> Such uses constitute the "soft power" of media, through which nations capitalize on the "attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies" in the pursuit of "get[ting] others to admire your ideals and to want what you want."<sup>30</sup> This is pleasure as seductress, her attractiveness overshadowing a tainted past; and here, too, women are caught in a double-bind of representing the very thing they are precluded from enjoying.

Second, Iwabuchi's analysis of this fandom, as part of his broader research of pan-East Asian media circulation and consumption, has been enormously influential in the context of both East Asian transnational and global media studies,<sup>31</sup> thus

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<sup>28</sup> Modleski, "The Terror of Pleasure," 156.

<sup>29</sup> Iwabuchi, "Undoing Inter-national Fandom," 90.

<sup>30</sup> Nye, *Soft Power*, x.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Chua Beng Huat (2008), "Structure of Identification and Distancing in Watching East Asian Television Drama"; Keehyung Lee (2008), "Mapping Out the Cultural Politics

warranting close attention. An example of this is found in Sun Jung's 2011 book on what she terms the pan-East Asian "soft masculinity"<sup>32</sup> of South Korean stars of the *Hanryū* (Korean wave) phenomenon in Japan and East Asia. Identifying its origins in the Japanese *bishōnen* (beautiful boy) aesthetic that circulated in South Korea through manga and anime, she argues that its "transformability or fluidity and its feminine appeal to consumers"<sup>33</sup> is at the heart of its regional (and, increasingly, global) reach. The transcultural appeal of 'soft masculinity' identified by Jung seems a particularly fruitful avenue for the further examination of global female fandoms of such 'soft' male stars as Bollywood's Shahrukh Khan or Hollywood icon Leonardo DiCaprio, in addition to South Korea's Bae Yong Joon or Hong Kong's Leslie Cheung. Yet, Jung bases her argument on Iwabuchi's critique of the cultural 'odor-lessness'<sup>34</sup> of products circulated transnationally by media conglomerates and governments seeking to capitalize on their 'soft power'. Similarly, her analysis of Bae's popularity in the Japanese context is equally indebted to Iwabuchi's critique of Japanese fans' nostalgic desire for Hong Kong stars, through which she argues that "BYJ's polite body exemplifies the nostalgia of the fans where counter-coevality is evident."<sup>35</sup> In this way, Jung reinforces the fundamentally trans/national orientation of academic research of transcultural fandoms, while at the same time confirming the nostalgic orientation of Japanese women in the regional East Asian context.

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of "the Korean Wave" in Contemporary South Korea"; Rowan Pease (2008), "Korean Pop Music in China: Nationalism, Authenticity, and Gender"; Youna Kim (2008), *Media Consumption and Everyday Life in Asia*; David Martin-Jones (2009), *Scotland: Global Cinema: Genres, Modes, and Identities*; Colette Balmain (2009), *Introduction to Japanese Horror Film*; Sun Jung (2011), *Korean Masculinities and Transcultural Consumption*.

<sup>32</sup> Jung, *Korean Masculinities*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Jung, "Chogukjeok Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity," 8.1

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.2.

<sup>35</sup> Jung, *Korean Masculinities*, 64.

While arguably satisfying at the level of critique, and certainly relevant in the understanding of the political implications of transnationally circulating media, the trans/national overdetermination of this perspective ultimately tells us little about what actually attracts and motivates fans. Emphasis on the trans/national assumes that there is a 'national' that either must be overcome or acquiesced to in order for fans to enjoy and appreciate fannish objects not of their own national habitus; in which 'overcoming' translates to resistance of either internal or external cultural hegemonies, and 'acquiescence' signals the impotence of fandom in the face of the economic, social, and/or political imperatives of the nation-state. Thus are we returned to the original conundrum of women's fandom.

In his recent (2010) critique of the state of transnational fandom studies, Iwabuchi argues that "what is at stake is not the degradation or romanticization of fans, but a disregard for the complicated processes of people's media culture consumption."<sup>36</sup> Addressing the very real sociopolitical issues that undergird state and corporate deployment of 'soft power' to advance their own interests both domestically and abroad, he stresses the need for a research agenda that takes seriously fans' and scholars' overt and covert collusion<sup>37</sup> in this dynamic, observing that "as we are now entering the age when states are getting deeply involved in the neoliberal circulation of media and popular culture by collaborating with media culture industries, nothing will be politically neutral."<sup>38</sup> Yet, in making this claim, Iwabuchi continues to replicate the very dichotomy of good/bad that has

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<sup>36</sup> Iwabuchi, "Undoing Inter-national Fandom," 89.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

characterized fandom studies for decades, contrasting ‘good’ scholarship of the sociopolitical implications of fandom with ‘bad’ scholarship of its affective meanings and pleasures for fans.

Moreover, while female fans make a late appearance in Iwabuchi’s polemic, representing all of popularly denigrated fandom in the figure of “middle-aged women fans who are addicted to Korean love stories and male stars,”<sup>39</sup> his argument for a more politically engaged fan studies does not engage with the ways in which gender, among other subjectivities, plays out both in fandom itself and in its scholarly representation and critique. As I have argued above, the absence of the female fan here is less a matter of myopia on Iwabuchi’s part than a symptom of broader problems facing the conceptualization of transnational fandom studies as an object of research. Yet, given the largely female composition of, in particular, transnational East Asian media fandoms, it is an omission that seriously undermines the project that Iwabuchi proposes.

### **The Imagined Communities of Transnational Fandom**

In his 1983 thesis, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson famously proposed that the nation is an “imagined political community,”<sup>40</sup> illustrating this through an examination of the ways in which emerging nation-states originally mobilized culture and print media in the fostering of global nationalisms. Anderson’s work has been a critical component of subsequent research that aims to cast light on state and corporate uses of culture in an ongoing project of (re)defining the bounded

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

nation-state. At the same time, the notion of imagined communities has proven an equally useful heuristic for the consideration of fan culture as a “community [that] exists as an idea grounded in a necessary mental abstraction; the impression of affective connections with people and places we rarely if ever meet or visit.”<sup>41</sup>

It is this dual deployment of imagined community that lies at the heart of arguably irreconcilable tensions within the field of transnational fandom studies. In the first instance, the community imagined by state and corporate actors is one in which diversity and difference are discounted in the interests of securing their cultural and political-economic hegemony. In the context of the transnational circulation of media, this imagined community becomes a key means by which nations ‘brand’ culture for overseas export.<sup>42</sup> Here, the seemingly innocuous nature of popular media acts as a Trojan horse of sorts, masking the myriad assumptions and elisions upon which the cohesion of the imagined community depends. Through their successful deployment of ‘soft power’, these players render fans complicit in the attempt to fix their representational legitimacy at the global level, which, in turn, has the effect of strengthening that same legitimacy in the domestic context.<sup>43</sup>

In the second instance, “communities of imagination and interest”<sup>44</sup> characterize fandoms that, as Henry Jenkins observes, “have long defined their memberships through affinities rather than localities.”<sup>45</sup> Particularly with the widespread use of digital communications technologies, such communities are

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<sup>41</sup> Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> Kim, “The Media and Asian Transformation,” 4.

<sup>43</sup> Iwabuchi, “Undoing Inter-national Fandom.”

<sup>44</sup> Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 195.

<sup>45</sup> Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 137.

increasingly transnational in scope, constituted “through common patterns of reading and appropriation”<sup>46</sup> that “bypass the nation-state on both the local and global level.”<sup>47</sup> It is in this ability of transnational fandoms to forge alliances of affect that exceed hegemonic state definitions of the ‘national’ that its counter-nationalist potential is located.<sup>48</sup> In what follows, I will explore the evolution and trajectory of what has come to comprise a still-nascent field of transnational fandom studies. This field derives first from certain concerns of media globalization studies; in particular, cultural imperialism, homogenization, and ‘hybridism’ as the institutional tools through which national, and even global, cultural hegemonies are secured and maintained. Secondly, it inherits a concurrent emphasis on the specific sites and lived experiences of transnational media flows, particularly as ways of rethinking essentialisms and the limitations of state and corporate institutions in determining discourse.

In 1997, Robert McChesney and Edward Herman characterized media globalization as the “larger cross-border flows of media outputs, the growth of media TNCs [transnational corporations] and the tendency towards centralization of media control.”<sup>49</sup> Within this system, they argued, audiences are implicated in a process of “thoroughgoing and incessant indoctrination in commercial values, whether [they] like it or not.”<sup>50</sup> The result, according to Masao Miyoshi (1999), is a world in which “‘universal’ consumerism...spreads beyond the boundaries of the first world into the

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<sup>46</sup> Sandvoss, *A Game of Two Halves*, 92. See also Hills, “Virtually Out There,” 154.

<sup>47</sup> Sandvoss, *Fans*, 55.

<sup>48</sup> See Jiwon Ahn (2008), *Animated Subjects*; Millie Creighton (2009), “Japanese Surfing the Korean Wave.”

<sup>49</sup> Herman & McChesney, *The Global Media*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

second and third...offer[ing] a powerful allurement for homogenization.”<sup>51</sup> Such discourse effectively established the implicit assumptions of the critique of media globalization: one-way flows from first-to-third world nations, the erosion of indigenous culture in favor of a universal (low) culture of mass consumption, and the inexorable consolidation of power into the hands of the few.

This critique was, in fact, part of a cyclical scholarly preoccupation with the intensified circulation of capital and culture across collapsing boundaries of time and space, with antecedents in concerns of nearly a decade earlier about the center-to-periphery flow of media and culture collectively termed ‘cultural imperialism’. In his own critique of the cultural imperialism thesis, John Tomlinson (1991) countered its alarmism with the argument that “extravagant claims for media power seem to arise where theorists come to see the media as determining rather than as mediating cultural experience – that is, as at the center of things rather than as related to other practices and experiences.”<sup>52</sup> Tomlinson’s concern with lived experiences of media globalization reflected Hannerz’s (1989) observation that, the legitimacy of concerns about the growing might of massive transnational corporations and the persistence of Euro-American global influence notwithstanding, “to be more completely persuasive... arguments about the impact of the transnational cultural flow would have to say something about how people respond to it.”<sup>53</sup> His own thesis of media globalization, based on what he termed the “global ecumene,”<sup>54</sup> argued that both flows and reception of media in the global context are characterized by their asymmetry and by

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<sup>51</sup> Miyoshi, “Globalization’, Culture, and the University,” 259.

<sup>52</sup> Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism*, 63.

<sup>53</sup> Hannerz, “Notes on the Global Ecumene,” 72.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

a “much more intricate organization of diversity”<sup>55</sup> than accounted for in models stressing a hierarchical center/periphery relationship.

The move away from linear and hierarchical concepts of global media flow was best articulated through Arjun Appadurai’s (1990) theorization of the ‘scapes’ of “imagined worlds, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe.”<sup>56</sup> Drawing from Anderson’s imagined communities, Appadurai’s ‘scapes’ afforded both scholars of both media globalization and, subsequently, transnational fandom a means of accounting for both asymmetry and ambivalence in the reception of transnational media and cultures:

An important fact of the world we live in today is that many persons on the globe live in such imagined worlds (and not just in imagined communities) and thus are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them.... Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. These scripts can and do get dis-aggregated into complex sets of metaphors by which people live...as they help to constitute narratives of the Other and proto-narratives of possible lives, fantasies which could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement.<sup>57</sup>

Echoing Hannerz, Appadurai conceived of two potential scenarios for the long-term effects of transnational cultural flows, saturation (homogenization) and maturation (hybridity), which both contended were interwoven, rather than discrete and oppositional, phenomena.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>56</sup> Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference,” 7.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 9.



Much work of latter-day media globalization studies has focused on this notion of hybridity, particularly as a potential means of transcending debates centering on “homogenization versus heterogenization.”<sup>58</sup> Yet, the term itself is a site of contested meanings and implications that continue to the present day. Drawing from the broad theorization of hybridity in works by Stuart Hall (1992), James Clifford (1992; 1997), and, in particular, Homi Bhabha (1994), Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1995) posited hybridity as a way of thinking about globalization outside the rubric of West-centric homogenization, in terms of a process “which gives rise to a global *mélange*”<sup>59</sup> and acts as “the antidote to essentialist notions of identity and ethnicity.”<sup>60</sup> The concern with essentialisms of nationality, gender, race, culture, and so on, that underlay Nederveen Pieterse’s exploration of hybridity was echoed in David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995) argument that Japan, above all other nation-states, “is significant because of its complexity: because it is non-Western, yet refuses any longer to be our Orient; because it insists on being modern, yet calls our kind of modernity into question.”<sup>61</sup>

Morley and Robin’s deployment of Japan as a chimera within the context of ‘Western’ cultural and ideological assumptions effectively constituted it as hybrid, a notion that inadvertently echoed both exceptionalist Japanese theories of its uniqueness within the East Asian regional context as both ‘modern’ and ‘Asian’, and contemporary notions of what Iwabuchi termed Japanese “hybridism.”<sup>62</sup> A decidedly essentialist idea of the uniqueness of Japanese practices and histories of cultural

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<sup>58</sup> Robertson, “Glocalization,” 27.

<sup>59</sup> Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” 161.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>61</sup> Morley & Robins, *Spaces of Identity*, 171.

<sup>62</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 54.

syncretism, hybridism afforded Japanese intellectuals and politicians a means of rationalizing the attempt to assume a leadership role in the dissemination and circulation of both 'Western' and 'Asian' culture. In a broader sense, the hybridity/hybridism binary is a striking example of the limits of unified theories of 'globalization', constituting a particularly pointed call to attend to the ways in which such theories play out both within specific national and regional contexts, as well as within local communities.

Such exhortations to observe the lived experience of media globalization that punctuated this body of work were the driving force behind research of transnational media audiences and specific sites of transnational media circulation, and it is here, in particular, that transnational fandom studies found its first iteration. Beginning with Ien Ang's (1985) seminal study of Dutch viewers of the American nighttime soap opera, *Dallas*, such work examined the intersection of new technologies and (trans)national subjectivities. VCR and satellite technologies, in particular, were interrogated for their potential to inform and transform such subjectivities, as in James Lull's (1991) examination of Mainland Chinese state television programming and the centrifugal effects of Hong Kong satellite penetration of Southern Chinese audiences, and Marie Gillespie's (1995) research on ways in which VCR technology fostered both a centripetal diasporic identity and hybrid subjectivities among Indians in the U.K. Purnima Mankekar's (1999) study of Indian women's spectatorial processes and rationales in their viewership of state-sponsored television programming introduced gender to the conversation, interrogating the extent and limits of its counter-nationalist potential among a specifically female viewership.

More recently, research by Michael Curtin (2007) has offered a broadly conceived examination of the global Chinese media sphere, rewriting discourses of the one-way, Hollywood-centric dissemination of media around the world to encompass a diversity of media flows that are equally global in scope. Iwabuchi's (2002) research of the role of Japanese media and consumers within the Southeast and East Asian context similarly sought to shift the focus of studies of media globalization to one attuned to the regional inflection of transnationally circulating media. At the same time, the widespread use of digital technologies such as music CDs, VCDs, and DVDs, as well as global uses of the Internet have both created and heightened the visibility of transnationally situated fans. Beginning in early work on the American fandom of Japanese anime and Hong Kong martial arts, the last decade has witnessed the proliferation of literature that brings the everyday practice of fandom into conversation with the global flow of media.

Anthropologist Brian Larkin's (2003) study of Nigerian fans of Bollywood cinema and stars offered a locally contextualized and materially-attuned examination of the localized significance of images of Indian starlets for male fans, offering a unique counterpoint to discussion of the gendered fandom of stars. Iwabuchi (2002) also shed light on fannish practices of cross-border media consumption through his examination of both the Taiwanese fandom of Japanese dramas, as well as the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars. Yet, as I have discussed above, this work harbors certain limitations that, as among the most influential works of transnational fandom studies to date, have echoed throughout the field. In his discussion of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, Iwabuchi writes of 'fans' but, his view

determined by the transnational context within which the fandom takes place, what he talks about are 'Japanese (women).' Contending that "what Japanese fans value in Hong Kong popular culture is...a different mode of Asian modernity, one that antithetically demonstrates what has gone wrong with Japan's modernization process,"<sup>63</sup> Iwabuchi nonetheless critiques fans for the heterosexist gaze that they turn on male stars. This is exacerbated by their apparent disinterest in "transforming their lives by actually leaving Japan or encountering cultural others in the form of non-Japanese men in real situations."<sup>64</sup> Thus, he argues, while Hong Kong cinema and stars might constitute a site for the imagination of alternative identities and modernities, female fans' lack of authentic engagement with Hong Kong (men) only serves to reinforce their 'nostalgic' Japanese gaze.

His consistent evocation of 'fans' notwithstanding, Iwabuchi makes but passing reference to theories of spectatorship and fandom in constructing his argument about the meanings that fans derive from Hong Kong stars. Similarly, albeit to opposite effect, where fandom scholars such as Matt Hills (2002) and Henry Jenkins (2004) have attempted to theorize transnational fandom, their work has suffered from its own relative lack of cultural contextualization. Hills's generative theory of the "transcultural homology"<sup>65</sup> underlying U.K. and American appropriations of '*otaku*' identity is limited by a reliance on English-language scholarship of transnational anime fandom and Japanese *otaku* that impedes its more nuanced interrogation.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Jenkins's notion of a latent "pop cosmopolitanism" in transnational fandom

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<sup>63</sup> Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia," 566.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 567.

<sup>65</sup> Hills, "Transcultural *Otaku*," 4-6.

<sup>66</sup> Galbraith and LaMarre, "Otakuology," 368.

suffers from overgeneralization; noting that many American anime fans engage in fan-related travel to Japan and Japanese language study, he extrapolates from this “openings for other kinds of conversation”<sup>67</sup> of a broader political and cultural nature. This, he argues, is the potential of pop cosmopolitanism: “an escape from parochialism and isolationism, the beginnings of a global perspective, and the awareness of alternative vantage points.”<sup>68</sup>

Not insignificantly, Jenkins situates pop cosmopolitanism within the context of his broader work on media convergence, through which he refers to an intensifying proximity between media institutional and fannish practices. In the context of transnational media, convergence takes place at the level of such activity as fansubbing, through which, by virtue of the foreign language acquisition it requires, a pop cosmopolitan perspective is fostered. Writ large, media convergence is a particularly useful way of conceptualizing the state of transnational fandom studies today. While media globalization studies historically have been concerned with conditions arising from time/space intensities, contemporary transnational fandom studies center on intensified producer and consumer roles as they impact the centripetal pull of institutions. Within this context, Jenkins perceives the potential for progressive grassroots activity and activism on the part of fans that trespass in the realm of media distribution, production, and circulation, while Iwabuchi observes the cynical usurpation of vocabularies of affective attachment by state and corporate players. In this way, we are returned to the binary of good/bad spectatorship, (over)determined by the transnational locus of cross-cultural fandoms.

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<sup>67</sup> Jenkins, “Pop Cosmopolitanism,” 129.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

The critique of 'resistance' discourse in fandom studies is not new,<sup>69</sup> yet, as Matt Hills (2002) argues, research based on "rigid assumptions that fandom and production are valuable, whereas consumption is somehow secondary and lacks value still need[s] to be contested rather than being used to underpin academic interventions in this area of study."<sup>70</sup> Within the context of transnational fandom studies, these assumptions most recently manifest as fans whose affective passions lead to a "transnational audience/fan alliance against the control of media culture production and distribution by global media culture industries," as contrasted with an increasingly undifferentiated mass of "people [who] enjoy indulging themselves with a playful commitment to a particular object of media culture, thanks to the development of digital communication technologies and of marketing strategies aimed at niche tastes;"<sup>71</sup> which is to say, fans who 'do' and fans who don't. That this differentiation is intended as an intervention in fan studies that, seeking to redeem the denigrated fan, "automatically and uncritically reproduces what 'fan' means, who fans are, and what they do, without contextualized field research and a sophisticated understanding of their activities"<sup>72</sup> only underscores the stubborn persistence of the binary of good/bad spectatorship in the academic literature of fandom.

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<sup>69</sup> See Janet Staiger (2000), *Perverse Spectators*; Matt Hills (2002), *Fan Cultures*; Christine Scodari (2003), "Resistance Re-Examined"; Simone Murray (2004), "Celebrating the story the way it is."

<sup>70</sup> Hills, "Transcultural Otaku," 30.

<sup>71</sup> Iwabuchi, "Undoing Inter-national Fandom," 88.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

## Towards a Pragmatics of Transcultural Fandom

Iwabuchi's call for the greater "contextualization" of fandom studies begs the question of which context(s)? His own interests lie in the sociohistorical and political economic settings of popular culture consumption and consumerism, particularly as they play out between nations with specific and, not infrequently, antagonistic histories. Yet, Aswin Punathambekar observes that the "assumption that 'non-Western' media are still tethered to the boundaries of their respective nation-states" is, as he says, "faulty." In contrast, he argues, "fan communities that cohere around various aspects of Indian cinema...tell us that we need to think beyond the 'national' as the most important scale of imagination and identity construction."<sup>73</sup> Thus, in appropriating Iwabuchi's call for more contextualized and sophisticated research of transnational fans, this project seeks to be "sensitive to a range of political and economic forces and distinct reception communities, in addition to subject positions tied to gender, ethnicity, [and] class"<sup>74</sup> in the recentering of fans and fan culture within research of transnationally-situated fandoms. I do not here deploy context in the interest of better describing an empirical transnational fandom, *per se*, but rather as an integral means of conceptualizing a *pragmatics* of transcultural fandom that seeks to understand a full range of contexts that inform, define, and produce its fan subjectivities. In this sense, rather than shying away from fan knowledges and taxonomies, this dissertation begins from a position of embracing them; not as uncritical reproduction, but as an essential means of comprehending their complexity

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 208-9.

<sup>74</sup> Murphy and Kraidy, "Towards an Ethnographic Approach," 7.

and implications for the ways we understand both the transnational circulation and consumption of media, as well as fans' multivalent relationship to it.

If the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars in the 1980s and 1990s is intriguing for what it can tell us about how women – and women's media pleasures – are constituted and defined in late capitalism, it is equally interesting for what it says about the circulation of media across both national borders and popular cultural contexts. In contrast with the cult fandom of Hong Kong cinema and stars in the West, the pursuit of which reinforced distance and difference even as it offered avenues of identification for culturally marginalized fans, it was a fandom predicated on the seemingly paradoxical desire to experience intimacy with the stars of a culture both literally and figuratively outside the Japanese media context. English-language research of star fandom historically has centered on fans' "identification and desire"<sup>75</sup> with and for stars, modalities that articulate easily with discourses of resistant fandom among the socially marginalized.<sup>76</sup> This is particularly the case in studies of the transnational fandoms of such Hong Kong icons as Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, the 'underdog' star personae of whom resonated with fans hailing from such diverse sites as America's inner cities and postcolonial Calcutta.<sup>77</sup> Yet, Bertha Chin observes that within the "idol-driven"<sup>78</sup> climate of East Asian fandom it is the desire for greater

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<sup>75</sup> McDonald, *The Star System*, 33. See also Richard Dyer (1986), *Heavenly Bodies*; Miriam Hansen (1986), "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification"; Mary Ann Doane (1987), *The Desire to Desire*; Jackie Stacey (1994), *Star Gazing*.

<sup>76</sup> See Richard Dyer's seminal 1986 work on the gay fandom of Judy Garland in *Heavenly Bodies*; John Fiske's 1989 analysis of patriarchal resistance in teenage girl fans of Madonna in *Reading the Popular*.

<sup>77</sup> Marchetti, "Jackie Chan and the Black Connection"; Prashad, "Bruce Lee and the Anti-imperialism of Kung Fu."

<sup>78</sup> Chin, "Beyond Kung Fu and Violence," 215.



intimacy with stars that is its prime motivator.<sup>79</sup> As William Kelly explains of Japanese fans, they “are not satisfied with the formal performances, with the mediated and staged glimpses of stars. They seek to get behind the curtain, to know more about the performers, to “possess” them through tokens like autographs and handprints and bootleg tapes.”<sup>80</sup>

Within popular discourses of Euro-American star fandom, the intersection of ‘intimacy’ and pleasure is particularly fraught with anxiety, characterized in the alarmist vocabulary of stalkers and frenzied mobs, and in images of bodies smashed against gates and police barricades. While such depictions equally permeate reporting on East Asian star fans within their local contexts, they exist alongside structured practices of achieving proximity to stars that diminish their overall ability to dominate discourses of star fandom.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, where American accounts of fan ‘stalking’ and frenzy draw on an assumed blurring of fan/star identities on the part of fans, in the Japanese context, “intimacy is not to be confused with identity. For several reasons, fans are often involved in an intense play between identifying and distancing.”<sup>82</sup> In contrast with some fans’ desire for greater physical proximity to stars, such reasons hinge on different facets of pleasure that derive from intimate *knowledges* of the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>80</sup> Kelly, “Introduction: Locating the Fans,” 9.

<sup>81</sup> The distinction between “stalking,” in the American context, and Japanese “*okkake*,” or ‘star-chasing’, is crystallized in the case of Japanese businessman and Britney Spears fan Shizawa Masahiko, against whom the singer had a restraining order issued in 2003. As described by Detective Jeff Dunn, on a report during the February 12, 2009 episode of ABC News’s *Nightline* entitled “The Stalker Files: Deadly Obsession,” Shizawa “came to America on a tourist visa for the sole purpose of following Britney Spears around the country on a concert tour....Here’s a picture of her limousine as she’s leaving one of the concert venues and on the back of the photograph he says, I’m chasing you. You know, she doesn’t know who this person is.” Interviewer Lisa Fletcher responded, “That would get anybody’s attention.” Notably, in Japanese, the phrase “I’m chasing you” would translate as “[*Anata o okkakete iru*,” signifying a comparatively harmless and well-recognized, if not wholly sanctioned, fan practice (ABC News Transcript, *Nightline*, Feb. 12, 2009).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 10.

minutiae of the “rules of engagement” with stars, “skepticism” borne of familiarity with stars, and the psychic distancing necessary for fans to engage in their own creative reworking of star personae and film texts.<sup>83</sup>

In this dissertation, I attend to three overlooked aspects of both the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars and transnationally-situated fandoms in general: history, affect, and practices of media consumption. The female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan did not occur within a cultural vacuum, but rather arose in the intersection of Japanese fan cultures and moviegoing practices and the Hong Kong studio and star systems of the 1980s and 1990s. As such, I adopt a multidisciplinary approach to this history, first tracing its discursive dimensions through an examination of the intersections of media reportage, industrial strategy, and gendered ideology. This perspective is informed by work on histories of media spectatorship, ranging from the discursive<sup>84</sup> to the material.<sup>85</sup> Discussion of the affective dimensions of Hong Kong stardom in the Japanese context is pursued through recent work on fan affect,<sup>86</sup> which I intend as a corrective to the tendency within contemporary transnational fandom studies to substitute ideology for affective meaning.

I hone my discussion of specific Japanese spectatorial and Hong Kong production contexts through work on the material and subjective experiences of popular culture fans and filmgoers in the Japanese context,<sup>87</sup> as well as the discursive

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Dyer (1986), *Heavenly Bodies*; Klinger (1994), *Melodrama and Meaning*; Stacey (1994), *Star Gazing*; Nash and Lahti (1999), “Almost Ashamed to Say I Am One of Those Girls’.”

<sup>85</sup> Spigel (1992), *Make Room for Television*; Acland (2003), *Screen Traffic*; Klinger (2006), *Beyond the Multiplex*.

<sup>86</sup> Silverstone (1994), *Television and Everyday Life*; Hills (2002), *Fan Cultures*; Sandvoss (2005), *Fans*.

<sup>87</sup> Robertson (1998), *Takarazuka*; Yano (2002), *Tears of Longing*; Kelly, et.al. (2004), *Fanning the Flame*; Aoyagi (2005), *Islands of Eight Millions Smiles*.

and material deployment of stardom in Hong Kong popular culture.<sup>88</sup> Discussion of the discursive construction of Japanese womanhood is informed by studies of both historical and contemporary iterations of women's gender expectations and their transgression.<sup>89</sup> I also consider the discourses that produced ongoing dialogue about Japan's role within the East Asian regional context.<sup>90</sup> As this brief overview suggests, my dissertation articulates a diversity of theoretical approaches in the construction of a contingent framework through which the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars may be understood; in this sense, my dissertation is not unlike the fandom that, I will argue below, these women cobbled together through the popular cultural resources at their disposal.

## Methodology

Primary fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted in Japan from 2001-2003 under the auspices of a MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) Research Scholarship. Research there included data collection at the Oya Sōichi Library, a repository for popular magazines and books, as well as in the popular cultural enclave of Nakano Broadway Mall, where I obtained fan-produced *dōjinshi* (fanzines) and Hong Kong film-centered pamphlets, film festival programs, and commercial film and fan magazines for use in the reconstruction of the "discursive

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<sup>88</sup> Bordwell (2000), *Planet Hong Kong*; Darling-Wolf (2004), "Virtually Multicultural"; Ogawa (2004), "Japanese Popular Music in Hong Kong"; Leung (2007), "Discursive Stardom in Hong Kong."

<sup>89</sup> Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda (1995), *Japanese Women*; Robertson (1998); Allison (2000), *Permitted and Prohibited Desires*; Rosenberger (2001), *Gambling with Virtue*; Kelsky (2002), *Women on the Verge*.

<sup>90</sup> Funabashi (1993), "The Asianization of Asia"; Ivy (1995), *Discourses of the Vanishing*; Ching (2000), "Globalizing the Regional, Regionalizing the Global"; Iwabuchi (2002), *Recentring Globalization*; Befu (2003), "Globalization Theory from the Bottom Up."

surround”<sup>91</sup> of the female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Throughout my fieldwork, a number of Japanese fans shared with me their experience and knowledge of Hong Kong star fandom over informal conversations that comprise much of the background of my analysis.

At the same time, however, I have also drawn on my own Hong Kong star fandom, which punctuated my experiences of study and employment in Japan that took place from the late 1980s through the late 1990s. In a recent essay, Jeanette Monaco (2010) argues for the utility of autoethnography in what she terms the “third wave of fan studies”<sup>92</sup> as a means of interrogating “the challenges and contradictions that shape the research experience as the individual moves within and between academic and...fan-audience modes of engagement.”<sup>93</sup> In my own case, such contradictions are manifested in an essay I first read while conducting secondary research for this dissertation. Nestled within Yiman Wang’s 2007 study, “A Star is Dead: A Legend is Born: Practicing Leslie Cheung’s Posthumous Fandom,” is a block quote from “an American fan who once lived in Hong Kong and became a Leslie fan in Japan”<sup>94</sup> that reads,

I think that the fact that LCIFC [Leslie Cheung Internet Fan Club] is on the internet [sic] makes it a great place for all kinds of people, all kinds of Chinese people, as well as people from many different backgrounds, to come together and share something in common. And, although I understand the problems with using English as the common language, I know I’m not the only one who really appreciates it!! (Lori 2000)<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Klinger, “Film History,” 109.

<sup>92</sup> Monaco, “Memory Work,” 102.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>94</sup> Wang, “A Star is Dead,” 331.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

Hazarding a guess that there are only so many such Americans bearing my given name who posted on the LCIFC boards, the act of reading this essay placed me in the wholly dissonant position of being interpellated as a fan in scholarly writing in the midst of my own academic research of an overlapping fandom. Through this dissonance, however, I have been afforded a singular opportunity to consider my own work from the perspective of what Henry Jenkins has termed the ‘aca-fan’, particularly as regards issues of methodology.

In one sense, close proximity between fan and scholar subjectivities might signify an inability to maintain the distance required for critical objectivity on the part of the researcher. Yet, with Hills (2007), I would argue that acknowledgement of a hybrid notion of the academic-as-fan “surely means letting go of an infantile fantasy of omnipotence in which scholars are imagined as the bearers of pure, anti-ideological thought...[and] going beyond viewing fan audiences as the problematic site of aesthetic judgements...in order to safely reconjure notions of academic authenticity.”<sup>96</sup> Indeed, if I have learned anything from a childhood spent in Hong Kong and a young adulthood largely passed in Japan, it is the necessity of admitting the contradictions and complexities of the multiple subjectivities we all possess if we are to make sense of our own lives and experiences. Thus, the critique I offer in this dissertation is based less on “distinguishing right from wrong, [than] identifying the range of possibilities that are considered as possibly true,”<sup>97</sup> acknowledging my own contradictory stance in the form of methodological transparency.

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<sup>96</sup> Hills, “Media Academics,” 47.

<sup>97</sup> Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, 88.

Throughout this dissertation, I base my analysis of fan affect and transnational subjectivities primarily on fan communications intended for a fellow fan readership dating from the mid-1980s through the early 2000, and peaking in the mid-1990s. Letters to the editors of Hong Kong media catalogs, 'Asian' music magazines, and serialized Hong Kong film-related books, as well as fan-produced *dōjinshi* and both privately and commercially published fan memoirs, comprise the evidence for a historical materialist perspective that, as Janet Staiger writes, must be sensitive to their susceptibility to "the power struggles, contradictions, and overdeterminations existing in the superstructure."<sup>98</sup> Writers were Japanese housewives, career-women, and freelance workers (*furitā*) ranging in age from late teens to middle-age (50s). While Tokyo residents are disproportionately represented within fan writing, I have attempted to represent the geographical diversity of the Hong Kong star fandom in Japan through the inclusion of fan communications from as far north as Hokkaido Prefecture, to as far south as the Kyūshū region. Given the quantum explosion of Hong Kong star-centered websites, bulletin boards, and forums in Japan beginning with the widespread adoption of the Internet in the late 1990s, I have chosen to confine this study primarily to the pre-Internet era; that said, further research on the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars warrants close examination of its (ongoing) online iterations.

I entered into this study looking to demonstrate the validity of Japanese mass media discourses of young, single, urban, professional fans of Hong Kong cinema whose spectatorship practices, I believed, constituted an opposition to hegemonic

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<sup>98</sup> Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 80.

Japanese, as well as American, popular cultures. Yet, examination of the materials gathered during the height of my own Osaka-based Hong Kong star fandom in 1995-1997, as well as those collected during my dissertation fieldwork, provided valuable insights into not only the affective appeal of Hong Kong stars, but, in particular, the ways in which transnational fandom intersected with the everyday experiences of ordinary women, revealing women's far more complex relationship to the media they consume and the discourses – media, academic, and even fannish – that surround and produce them.

## **Overview**

This dissertation will examine the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars from three intertwined perspectives, each with the aim of better understanding the lived experience of transnational fandom. Chapter One will consider the discursive construction of both Hong Kong cinema and its female fandom in Japan of the late 1980s and 1990s. By way of contextualizing this analysis, I first observe Jackie Chan's Japanese fandom in the early and mid-1980s, discussing the ways in which the marketing and promotion of Chan and his films to a specifically female audience ultimately positioned him as a counterpoint to subsequent efforts to redefine Hong Kong cinema and stars in Japan. In particular, Chan's comically '*dasai*' (uncool) image was contrasted with the '*kakko ii*' (cool) films and stars of director Wong Kar-wai, the promotion of which was aggressively pursued by Hiroko Shinohara, president of the fledgling distribution company Prénom H. Following an examination of the ways in which Shinohara, aided by film critics and small-scale film festival programmers,

effectively created a discourse of ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong film/fandom in the 1990s, I look at the broader social implications of this discourse. In particular, I use Karen Kelsky’s (2001) notion of Japanese female ‘internationalism’ as a means of interrogating both mass media and fans’ own narratives of ‘Asia’-centered female empowerment through Hong Kong film fandom.

By way of accounting for a fandom that, in practice, far exceeded the discourse of fashionable Hong Kong film that characterized it in the Japanese mass media, Chapter Two begins with an examination of the broad reasons for women’s interest in Hong Kong stars. As in other work on transnational fandom, I argue that cultural affinity was a key motivator; however, the ‘culture’ of such analyses typically is defined in terms of regional racial and ‘traditional’ cultural affinities. In contrast, here I speak specifically of popular cultural affinities that, by virtue of the regional influence of material practices of the Japanese popular music industry, evoke what Matt Hills (2002) has termed “transcultural homologies”<sup>99</sup> between both Japanese and Hong Kong entertainers and their fans. Given the largely uncoordinated circulation of Hong Kong films in Japan through the mid-1990s, I next examine the sites of fans’ media acquisition, with particular attention to the ways that their physical, as well as cultural, marginality effectively produced what I contingently term a ‘trans-cult-ural’ fan subjectivity. Finally, I look at the ways in which women ‘domesticated’ Hong Kong stars, incorporating film spectatorship, concert attendance, and even travel to Hong Kong into the patterns of their everyday lives.

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<sup>99</sup> Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 4-6.



The question of whether or not transnational fandom affects fans' national identities arguably is the single greatest concern of transnational fandom studies. Yet, its binary orientation makes it an especially unproductive way of thinking about the intersection of fandom and the (trans)national. Chapter Three thus seeks to explore the "range of possibilities"<sup>100</sup> that comprise Japanese women's negotiations and experiences of the transnational differences of their Hong Kong star fandom. I first discuss the articulation of Japanese popular culture and Hong Kong star personae in fan-produced *dōjinshi* as a means of creating a seamless fannish experience that effectively elided issues of national/ethnic difference insofar as they remained insulated by fictional narrative. I then interrogate this elision through a look at a fan-circle *dōjinshi* centering on Aaron Kwok's 1997 Japan Tour, where fans' feelings of intimacy were disrupted by Kwok's attempts to address his "Japanese" fans. I follow this with a discussion of practices of *okkake* ('star-chasing') in Hong Kong that similarly privilege the perception of intimacy over cultural difference with stars. For some fans, the transnational locus of such fan activity produced dissonance between their perceptions of Hong Kong as a site of star-centered pilgrimage and their visceral experience of it. I discuss the destabilizing effect of such dissonances with particular attention to their role in evoking fan self-reflexivity as Japanese within a transnational context. Studies of transnational fandom often conceptualize such self-reflexivity as a manifestation of fans' nascent awareness of the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts within which transnational fandom takes place. Addressing this assumption, I argue that, although widely (if implicitly) acknowledged as the basis of socio-

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<sup>100</sup> Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, 88.

political sensitivity within academic literature on transnational fandoms, such self-reflexivity bears its own limitations in terms of its potential to foster cross-cultural understanding.

I conclude this dissertation with a brief discussion of the implications of a pragmatics of transcultural fandom on the recent 'boom' of academic work on the Korean Wave in Japan. This phenomenon has industrial, fan cultural, and affective antecedents in the female fandom of Hong Kong stars, yet emphasis on the ways in which tensions and transformations in relations between Japan and South Korea are articulated through fan interest and activity has limited the ways the *Hanryū* has been – and can be – understood. Drawing on the work of this dissertation, I will discuss the ways in which a pragmatics of transcultural fandom, attuned to not only its ideological and institutional contexts, but also those of its constituent discourses, (fan) histories, and material practices, might illuminate aspects of the fandom of Korean stars in such a way that we might be able “to think beyond the ‘national’ as the most important scale of imagination and identity construction”<sup>101</sup> for this – and other – transnationally-situated fans.

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<sup>101</sup> Punathambekar, “Between Rowdies and Rasikas,” 208-9.

## CHAPTER ONE

### 'FASHIONABLE' HONG KONG FILM (FANDOM) IN JAPAN

We were excited by Bruce Lee.  
We burst into laughter at Mr. Boo.  
We fell in love with Jackie Chan.  
We were knocked out by Shaolin martial arts,  
Pummeled by ninja, and bounced by *kyonshi*.  
And now, we're drunk on 'Hong Kong Cinema'.  
Hong Kong Film Exposition 1988 program<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

At the beginning of Alfred Cheung's 1999 Hong Kong-Japanese collaboration, *Moumantai*, the film's protagonist, Daijirō (comedian Okamura Takashi), awakens to find a letter from his girlfriend, Reiko, announcing that she has left him to become a receptionist at Jackie Chan's production office in Hong Kong. Explaining in voiceover, "Ever since I first started watching Jackie's movies, his face is always on my mind," she asks him to cherish the memories they share. Panicked, Daijirō phones several of Reiko's friends, exclaiming to one in his broad Osaka accent, "She's left to meet Jackie Chan!" to which the woman replies, "I'd like to meet him, too!" Another ignores his plight, instead asking Daijirō to have Reiko send her a Leslie Cheung poster. His indignity culminates in finding himself surrounded by posters of his nemesis at the film paraphernalia shop where he works. When a fashionable young woman in a Mandarin-collared blouse approaches him asking for a *Rumble in the Bronx* poster, Daijirō informs her that they don't sell Jackie Chan posters. She sheepishly points to

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this dissertation are mine.

the Chan poster behind him, to which he responds “That’s Jackie *Cheung*.” He tells the woman that the only Jackie Chan paraphernalia they have in stock is one doll that she is free to take, repeatedly beating it on the counter until she and her boyfriend scurry out of the store, the heartbroken clerk calling after them, “You shouldn’t watch too many Jackie Chan movies!”

Moments later, Daijirō receives a phone call from a friend in Hong Kong, breathlessly announcing that Jackie Chan is standing next to him and asking if he would like to speak with the star. Responding in the affirmative, Daijirō hears a deep voice say in English, “Hello.” Flustered, he responds in halting Cantonese, “*Nei ho?*” (How are you?), before stammering in broken English, “I love you. Do you love me?” After sharing in Japanese that he’s seen all of the star’s films, his friend breaks into laughter over his clever impersonation of Chan, prompting Daijirō to hang up in disgust. He angrily picks up a ping pong ball gun and starts firing balls at a poster of Jackie Chan hanging on the wall across from him, until one of the balls accidentally hits the middle-aged male manager of the store and he is fired. The scene cuts to Daijirō standing outside the shop, praying for the success of the store and the continued health of the company president before heading off to Hong Kong in pursuit of Reiko.

In the space of just four minutes, this sequence succinctly – if unwittingly – captures the two competing media discourses of 1980s and 1990s Hong Kong film and star fandom in Japan. Within its narrative context, Jackie Chan, as Hong Kong’s most recognizable star, stands in for the whole of Hong Kong cinema, his martial arts prowess putting him second only to Bruce Lee on a cult hierarchy of martial arts stars

among male fans in Japan. Yet, the Hong Kong paraphernalia shop at which Daijiro works is a visible counterpoint to Chan's mainstream fandom, recognizable as Cine City, the retail arm of independent film distribution company Prénom H. Located in Tokyo's Aoyama fashion district, Cine City specialized in books, music, video, and film memorabilia of European and American art cinema, as witnessed in the advertisements for DVDs of Vincent Gallo's *Buffalo 66* (1998) and François Truffaut's *Antoine et Colette* (1962) that adorn Daijiro's sales counter. A sister shop, Cine City Hong Kong (which, by the late 1990s, occupied space in the far end of Cine City proper) was primarily devoted to the promotion and sales of ancillary goods related to Prénom H's own Wong Kar-wai releases (fig. 1).



**Figure 1:** The interior of Cine City as seen in *Moumantai*. The left-hand wall features posters of the Leslie Cheung vehicle *Moonlight Express* (1999) and the UFO produced *Anna Magdalena* (1998) featuring Takeshi Kaneshiro and Aaron Kwok. Posters for Jackie Chan's *Who Am I?* (1998) and *Police Story IV* (1996) are on the post behind the couple.

While Cine City targeted cinephiles of both sexes, Cine City Hong Kong catered to the specific interests of female fans through its marketing of music CDs, DVDs and videos, posters, postcards, film pamphlets, books, and magazines centered almost exclusively on the male stars of Hong Kong cinema. To the uninitiated, the scene's juxtaposition of Jackie Chan movie posters and those featuring Japanese-Taiwanese heartthrob Kaneshiro Takeshi, Canto-pop king Aaron Kwok, and superstar Leslie Cheung seems to represent the full spectrum of women's Hong Kong star fandom in Japan; and, in a material sense, it does. Ironically, however, it was Chan's mainstream popularity that constituted a discursive counterpoint to the 'fashionable' films that came to characterize 1990s Hong Kong cinema in the Japanese press.

We are accustomed to writing about Anglo-American fans within the context of their denigration – both real and assumed – in social and, in particular, mass media discourse. In Japan, where popular culture fandom dates back at least as far as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,<sup>2</sup> moral panics over, and mass mediations of, potentially disruptive popular cultural fans also have characterized discourses of fandom. From the “pathology”<sup>3</sup> of female fans of the all-female Takarazuka theatrical ensemble to the *otaku* panic of the early 1990s,<sup>4</sup> fandom in Japan, like that of its English-speaking counterparts, has a long history of being depicted in terms of obsession and hysteria. Thus, what is particularly striking about the 1980s and 1990s female fandom of Hong Kong stars is the extent to which it elided such characterization within the Japanese mass media. Instead, reportage on the fandom centered on the ‘fashionability’ of films by Wong Kar-wai,

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<sup>2</sup> See Susumu Matsudaira (2002), “Hiiki Renchū” and C. Andrew Gerstle (2002), “Flowers of Edo,” for discussion of kabuki fans and fan clubs in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 152.

<sup>4</sup> Kinsella, *Women on the Verge*, 290.

Peter Chan, Fruit Chan, and others, constituting fans as a moneyed class of young, single, urban, professional women. Not quite an empirical description, such women were part of a complex rubric of classification that sought to mitigate the disruptive feminine in Japan.<sup>5</sup> Put differently, the diversity of female fans was amalgamated in journalistic reporting into a representative ‘type’ that most closely fit with the kinds of cosmopolitan cinema being distributed by Prénom H and marketed at Cine City Hong Kong. Mass media accounts of the fandom drew on an emancipatory discourse of what Karen Kelsky has termed “internationalist”<sup>6</sup> women, translating fan interests and activities into a loosely organized articulation of gender resistance and Hong Kong stars.

Within the context of English-language scholarship of popular culture fandom, the mass media dissemination of a discourse of ‘resistant’ fandom is noteworthy for its rarity, given that certain such works have posited notions of resistance in part as counterarguments to ongoing reportage of fannish excess in the press. In this chapter, I will trace the evolution of this discourse to the emergence of a ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong cinema and stars that itself began in the rejection of the perceived mass mediation of Jackie Chan fandom in the 1980s. I begin this chapter with an exploration of the means by which Chan, in conjunction with his manager and Japanese promoters, cultivated a female-friendly star persona in Japan through television appearances, commercials, and broadcasts of his family-friendly feature films, as well as his deployment in magazines and events aimed at female fans of

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<sup>5</sup> A detailed analysis of the terminology used in the ongoing differentiation between men and women in the Japanese mass media can be found in *Media ni kakareru joseizō (Women, Words and the Media)*, ed. Suzuki Akiko (Tokyo: Katsura Shobō, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 2.

Japanese pop idols. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the re-articulation of Hong Kong cinema and stars as 'fashionable' counterpoints to Chan's mainstream appeal. I pay particular attention here both to the locus of fashionable film spectatorship, as well as to the ancillary paraphernalia through which this fashionability was materialized. Finally, I interrogate the ways in which this iteration of the fandom came to constitute the entirety of female fandom of Hong Kong films and stars within the Japanese mass media, with particular attention to how it was deployed as a rationale for both the elision of serious Japanese regional engagement, and women's own fandom.

### **Enter the Monkey**

Prior to Bruce Lee's electric arrival on Japanese screens in late 1973, only four Hong Kong films had received theatrical release in Japan: Zhu Shilin's *Sorrow of the Forbidden City* (1948), the Evan Yang Japanese-Hong Kong co-production, *Blood Will Tell* (1954), Yang's collaboration with director Zhang Shankun, *The Little Girl Named Cabbage* (1955), and the Li Han-hsiang epic, *The Kingdom and the Beauty* (1958).<sup>7</sup> To a film, these movies failed to make any lasting impression on Japanese audiences, the result of Japanese filmgoers' indifference to films outside the Japan-Hollywood binary.<sup>8</sup> This changed with the release of Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* (1973) in December 1973, which, in contrast with previous Hong Kong films, received wide

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<sup>7</sup> Ishizaka, "Shiryō," 198; Yau, *Honkon-Nihon*, 249.

<sup>8</sup> Yau, *Honkon-Nihon*, 250.



distribution in Japan by virtue of being a co-production between Lee's own Concord Productions and Warner Bros.<sup>9</sup>

Having reached mainstream theaters, *Enter the Dragon* made an immediate and lasting impact on the Japanese film market: the film ran for several months in theaters, finishing the year as the second-highest grossing foreign film of 1974 at \$5.6 million.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Tōwa and Tōei studios entered into competition for the distribution rights to the remainder of Lee's films,<sup>11</sup> and Bruce Lee posthumously ended 1974 as Japan's "number-one moneymaking star."<sup>12</sup> Although Lee's films were clearly marketed to a male audience, he was not without female fans. In contrast with stale Japanese fare of the same period, Bruce Lee's embodiment of both modern Asian "coolness" and traditional moral righteousness drew admiration from fans that recognized in his sheer physicality something very different from the gunfights of Hollywood films.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it was not until the arrival on Japanese screens of Lee's successor, Jackie Chan, that Japanese women began to turn their attention to Hong Kong cinema in earnest.

Seen as the successor to Bruce Lee's films (and moneymaking capabilities), competition was equally fierce for the rights to distribute Chan's films in Japan. Chan

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<sup>9</sup> Yau (2007) observes that the film was thematically and stylistically closer to James Bond films than to Lee's earlier pictures, and it was this, coupled with the extensive distribution network afforded to Hollywood films, that guaranteed Lee an audience in Japan. Indeed, noting that an earlier overture from Raymond Chow to *Zatōichi* star and director Katsu Shintarō, concerning the possibility of releasing Lee's *Fist of Fury* (1972), was rejected, Yau argues that if it had not been for its distribution by WB, *Enter the Dragon* also might not have received Japanese theatrical release (250).

<sup>10</sup> "1974 Yōga sakuhin haikyū shūnyū," 113. All dollar figures are based on the average exchange rate for the year given.

<sup>11</sup> Kuroi, "Kōgyōkai," 92; Yau, *Honkon-Nihon*, 252-3.

<sup>12</sup> Udagawa, "Gunshō doragon," 90.

<sup>13</sup> Iida, "Nihon ni okeru Honkon eiga," 44.

was publicized as the mischievous “monkey” to Lee’s more somber “dragon” and initially promoted to male audiences with an emphasis on his performances of masculinity: daredevil acrobatics, ability to withstand pain, and his heterosexual sex appeal. Kung-fu movie magazines featured photographs of Chan (alongside photos of Lee and up-and-coming star Jet Li) in all their muscle-bound ferocity, and articles about the martial arts philosophies of each were bookended by advertisements for the kung-fu paraphernalia featured in Hong Kong films (nunchucks, yellow track suits, black Chinese slippers, etc.), kung-fu correspondence courses, and miracle cures for chronic shortness.

Given the greater accessibility of Chan’s comedy kung-fu, in comparison with the heavy-handed seriousness of Lee’s films, it is unsurprising that he enjoyed some popularity among women from an early point in his Japanese career. However, it was not until the 1982-83 period that women began to take a noticeable interest in the star. Highly rated television broadcasts of Chan’s *Snake in the Eagle’s Shadow* (1977), *Drunken Master* (1978), *The Fearless Hyena* (1979), and *The Young Master* (1980), each of which garnered over 20% of market share,<sup>14</sup> helped to introduce Chan to audiences otherwise unlikely to encounter him in theaters. Similarly, Hal Needham’s 1981 ensemble comedy, *The Cannonball Run*, was also instrumental in bringing Chan to a mainstream viewership. The third-highest grossing film at Japanese theaters in 1982 (behind a Japanese double-bill and South Africa’s *The Gods Must Be Crazy*), *Cannonball Run* earned \$8,400,000 at the Japanese box office, making it the highest

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<sup>14</sup> Kurata, *Honkon den’ei hyakka*, 130.

grossing Hong Kong film<sup>15</sup> to receive Japanese theatrical distribution to that point.<sup>16</sup>

Chan's limited screen time notwithstanding, *Cannonball Run* was marketed in Japan as a Jackie Chan vehicle, his face positioned front and center in the film's Japanese poster, and the fact that he 'costarred' with such Hollywood luminaries as Burt Reynolds, Roger Moore, Dean Martin, and Sammy Davis, Jr. signaled his arrival on the international movie scene and solidified his star pedigree for Japanese moviegoers. *Cannonball Run* further extended Chan's reach into the mainstream Japanese audience when it was broadcast on Fuji Television on April 7, 1983, garnering the highest ratings of any Hong Kong film to that point with 26.4% of audience share,<sup>17</sup> and 1984 saw two Chan films, *Cannonball Run II* and *Project A* (1983), rise to the top of the year's highest-grossing foreign films, trailing only *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.<sup>18</sup>

It was around this time that Chan's growing female fandom began to be recognized and courted in publications targeted primarily at men. Articles with such unwieldy titles as "An Introduction to Kung Fu that Even Girls Can Understand,"<sup>19</sup> printed in the bubbly font of teen idol magazines, appeared alongside detailed discussions of Chan's martial arts prowess. Girls and women were called upon to account for their unlikely interest in the star, with one writing,

Much more than Bruce Lee or Jet Li, Jackie Chan seems approachable and more like a friend. Bruce Lee is a grown man who's been around, and it's hard to imagine him being playful. Jet Li is still a child; he might be playful, but you couldn't talk with him about adult things. But Jackie is a mix of maturity and boyishness, and it seems like you could be both playful and have an adult

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<sup>15</sup> Despite its Hollywood pedigree, *The Cannonball Run* was a Golden Harvest release.

<sup>16</sup> "1982 yōga sakuhin haikyū shūnyū," 122.

<sup>17</sup> Kurata, *Honkon den'ei hyakka*, 130.

<sup>18</sup> "1984 yōga sakuhin haikyū shūnyū," 124.

<sup>19</sup> Saijō, "Onna no ko demo wakarū kunfū nyūmon."

conversation with him.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, in a March 1984 *Kinema Junpō* (Movie times) feature, Takahashi Teruko described a meeting with Chan in the breathless tones of a true fan, noting that he was “much smaller than he looks in the movies...more like a little boy than a man,”<sup>21</sup> especially in his childlike pleasure at her gift of homemade cookies. Despite his appearance at a dim sum restaurant “wearing an unbuttoned shirt, swimming trunks (!), and sneakers without socks,” Takahashi writes that “as a fan...I was simply filled with happiness” to meet him.<sup>22</sup> As described by fans, both Chan’s boyish persona and openness were at the center of his appeal to Japanese girls and women. As one explained, “I don’t know if it’s because he’s Asian and different from Western stars, but he seems approachable....It’s feels like, hey, you never know, even I could marry him.”<sup>23</sup> This emphasis in fan accounts of Chan’s perceived approachability was critical to his refiguration along Japanese pop idol lines, the geographical proximity of Hong Kong to Japan enabling him to engage regularly in such ‘fan service’ as highly mediated and orchestrated meet-and-greet events with fans.

Japanese distributors discerned a potentially lucrative audience in Japanese girls and women, whose discretionary spending had spawned such popular culture industry behemoths as the boy-bands (‘Johnny’s’) of music promoter Johnny Kitagawa. Thus, from as early as 1983, Chan was linked semiotically with so-called ‘idol’ culture. *My Idol* magazine, which typically promoted Japanese pop idols, produced a ¥590 (\$2.60) special edition commemorating the 1984 Japanese release of *Project A* (1983) in

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<sup>20</sup> Kiyohara, “Jakkī Chen no sugao,” 66-7.

<sup>21</sup> Takahashi, “Jakkī Chen no sugao,” 63.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Sasaya, “Omowazu,” 75.

conjunction with Tōhō-Tōwa, the film's distributor. In addition to film stills, the booklet featured a short manga depiction of Chan's childhood and early career, a centerfold of Chan signed by the star "To Japanese Movie Fan," and an advertisement for the "Jackie Chan Cine Club," which offered one-year fan club membership for the not-insubstantial amount of ¥5,000 (\$21). Similarly, the *Project A* film pamphlet, available at extra cost to moviegoers at theaters, included alongside the standard plot synopsis an interview with self-described fan Okamura Ryō (who includes a picture of herself taken with a smiling Chan), as well as a section entitled "All About Jackie Chan," including not only commonly known information (Chan's birthplace, birthdate, and physical characteristics), but also such minutiae as his favorite foods, colors, and clothes, as well as a description of his "ideal woman" and the age at which he would most like to marry.<sup>24</sup> In 1984, Chan released in Japan an album, *Love Me*, that included songs in English, Japanese, and Cantonese such as the titular "Love Me," "Movie Star," and "Wait for Me." Cumulatively, such promotional activity comprised a concentrated effort to align the martial arts star with Japanese pop idols in order to capitalize on a particularly lucrative fan base of young girls and women.<sup>25</sup>

These efforts culminated in the publication of a volume entitled *Okurimono* (Gift), 'presented' to Chan's Japanese fans in 1985. Ostensibly authored by the star, *Okurimono* invited fans to imagine an intimate relationship with him, first through

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<sup>24</sup> In fact, Chan had already married, unbeknownst to his fans, two years earlier.

<sup>25</sup> Based on assessments by Hong Kong film industry insiders about the Japanese film market, it can be surmised that such activity was conceived largely by Chan's Japanese promoters. Hong Kong-based prognostications centered overwhelmingly on the distribution of martial arts films, with a clear emphasis on a presumed male audience (Yeung, "Understanding the Japanese Market"; Leung, "The Lure of the Exotic").

cover art featuring Chan, clad in a white tuxedo, bearing flowers and champagne for his fan-reader (fig. 2), and later through a montage of photos featuring Chan in a hotel



Figure 2: The front cover of Chan's book, *Okurimono*.

room, dressed and apparently awaiting his paramour. Like much of Chan's Japanese promotion in the early 1980s, *Okurimono* walked a fine line between courting fans and seeking to contain their desire. Come-hither images of the star in various stages of undress or engaged in such domestic tasks as cooking<sup>26</sup> were interspersed among

<sup>26</sup> Pictures of Chan cooking, set against the Japanese handwritten caption, "Doing my best for you" (*kimi no tame ni sei ippai*) depict him in white chef's garb and red bandana, surrounded by eggs, live chickens, a gas table, spatula, wok, Lea & Perrins® Worcestershire Sauce, Kraft Real Mayonnaise, Bertolli Olive Oil, and a box of Purina 9 Lives cat food, apparently in the service of making of fried eggs and spaghetti (145).

features that worked to inscribe a properly distanced mode of fandom, even as they evoked a fantasy of marriage-centered intimacy with Chan.

One such feature, in which the star's personal information is provided to a computer dating service, matches him with his ideal Japanese partner. 'Mihoko' is a true Renaissance woman of 28 who works and lives in Tokyo, enjoys knitting, sewing, basketweaving, and playing golf and tennis, believes that important household decisions should be left to her husband, and would rather be a full-time homemaker than a career woman.<sup>27</sup> While not "forgetful of old values and ways," she has a "full understanding of new ideas and modern sensibilities." She is the type who "can't rest if the cleaning, laundry, etc. aren't done correctly," good with the household finances, and trusted in her community.<sup>28</sup> In all, 'Mihoko' embodies nothing so much as an anachronistic iteration of the *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) of early modern Japanese political ideology,<sup>29</sup> her idealized perfection far out of the reach of ordinary girls and women. In this sense, the snapshot of Chan's ideal Japanese woman acted as a prophylactic of sorts against fans who might seek to act on the very desires enflamed by *Okurimono*.

The book further works to contain fan desire in a subsequent section entitled, "Love Ya!," in which Chan assumes the role of advice columnist, answering the letters – "translated by someone on my staff"<sup>30</sup> – of lovesick young fans. The Chan of this section anticipates and deflects fans' desire for real intimacy with him first by emphasizing 'appropriate' ways to handle disappointment in love. In one letter, "Mary"

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<sup>27</sup> Chan, *Okurimono*, 40-41.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>29</sup> Uno, "The Death of 'Good Wife, Wise Mother'?" 293-4.

<sup>30</sup> Chan, *Okurimono*, 74.

writes that she regrets having used a proxy to tell a boy about her feelings for him, to which Chan responds, “I was really moved by Mary’s letter. If Mary had been here by me, I probably would have hugged and blessed her. At the least, I would likely have treated her to apple pie.”<sup>31</sup> Having thus assured his readership that he would have been *there* for her, both literally and figuratively, Chan goes on to observe that there are three things she should be proud of in her behavior: “One, she confessed her feelings to him even though she’s shy....Two, she’s recovered from her heartbreak in a really healthy way. Three, she’s reconsidering her decision to have someone else speak for her.”<sup>32</sup> The star’s objective approbation here is echoed in a subsequent message for 28 year-old “Cindy,” who cannot forget a man she dated for a year, in which he writes, “If you still think that this man is wonderful even now, isn’t it alright for you to embrace that feeling in your heart and love him until the feeling fades?...If you want to dispel the sadness – I know, watch one of my movies. My movies are there for people like you.”<sup>33</sup>

The emotional detachment of the advice offered here is one means by which the star was discursively distanced from his fans, carefully differentiating between real-world romantic attachments and the imaginary fannish one cultivated throughout *Okurimono*. This differentiation plays a critical role in the book’s attempt to control the conversation about Chan’s own love life, which, by 1985, had become the subject of tabloid fodder in Japan as well as Hong Kong. On the heels of his advice to lovelorn fans, ‘Chan’ turns the conversation to his own romantic troubles, angrily

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 80-82.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 83-84.



denouncing media intrusions into his personal life while taking care not to alienate his female fans, writing, “there is a world of difference between [their questions] and the warm words from fans asking about the same thing.”<sup>34</sup> Then, making good a promise featured on the *obi*<sup>35</sup> of *Okurimono* to introduce his “girlfriend Joanne,” Chan confides to his fans that, in fact, he does have a girlfriend, but that they are not planning to marry. In fact, the star had married Taiwanese actress Joan Lin Feng-jiao three years earlier, while his popularity was still on the rise in Japan. He had not announced his marriage in Hong Kong or elsewhere, and since the promotion of Chan’s persona to Japanese girls and women was predicated on his presumed eligibility, he remained tight-lipped.

The tension between Chan’s assertion of his right to a private life and his marketing as a marriageable Japanese-style pop idol together formed the “constituent instabilit[y]”<sup>36</sup> of his Japanese star persona, the implications of which affected both Chan and the marketing and consumption of Hong Kong films going into the 1990s. Chan blamed news about his relationship with Lin for the 1985 Tokyo suicide of a young female fan, as well as the attempted suicide of a 24 year-old Japanese woman outside of Chan’s Hong Kong offices in 1986, with stories about his emotionally unstable legion of Japanese female fans circulating in the American press precisely at the time of Chan’s last, successful push into the American market. Through their repetition in such wide-reaching publications as the *New York Times Magazine* and

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>35</sup> A book *obi* is a strip of paper wrapped around the jacket of a book that includes endorsements and information about the book’s contents.

<sup>36</sup> Lahti and Nash, “Almost Ashamed to Say,” 71.

the *Chicago Sun-Times*,<sup>37</sup> these stories contributed to Chan's establishment as a pan-Asian superstar to mainstream Western moviegoers heretofore unfamiliar with his extensive oeuvre.

Ironically, the Japanese mainstream success of Chan's films, coupled with a perception *within Japan* of his female fandom as immature and highly mediated by his Japanese promoters, itself constituted the structuring absence of a subsequent iteration of Hong Kong film fandom among Japanese women in the 1990s. By the late 1980s, Chan's films were marketed alongside those of the '*kyonshī*' (Chinese vampire) boom as part of broad attempts to capitalize further on the tastes of female moviegoers. Nominally derived from the *Mr. Vampire* (1985) series of films starring Lam Ching-ying, the *kyonshī* boom was more accurately attributable to the Taiwanese *Hello Dracula* (1985) series of films that introduced child star Liu Chih-yu as Ten-ten, the granddaughter of a Taoist priest. Featuring children and, in particular, a toddler *kyonshī*, these films had a *kawaii* (cute) factor that led to their successful marketing to Japanese girls and women through an extensive range of ancillary paraphernalia including stuffed *kyonshī*, keychains, and notebooks (fig.3).

The Taiwanese pedigree of the *Hello Dracula* series notwithstanding, their general inclusion in the pantheon of Hong Kong-produced *kyonshī* films of the mid-1980s effectively rendered them part and parcel of 'Hong Kong cinema'. Achieving near ubiquity at the same time that Jackie Chan was enjoying his greatest Japanese success, films of the two booms merged in a pervasive and enduring sense in Japan of

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<sup>37</sup> Jaime Wolf, "Jackie Chan: American Action Hero?" 22; Jae-ha Kim, "Jackie Chan Wants to Conquer Your Country," 1.

Hong Kong cinema as “kitschy” (fig. 4).<sup>38</sup> Yet, by the end of the 1980s, this view reflected neither much of what was coming out of the Hong Kong film industry, nor the evolving tastes of a growing female fandom of Hong Kong cinema and stars in Japan. Thus it was that a new discourse of Hong Kong films and stars arose in Japan, emerging in the disconnect between their popular perception and their new reality.



**Figure 3:** A Kyonshi goods giveaway in *Honkon eiga bideo* (Hong Kong film video) catalogue.



**Figure. 4:** The cover of *Honkon eiga bideo* catalogue.

### Creating ‘Fashionable’ Hong Kong Cinema

In the mid-1990s, Japanese journalists began reporting on an emerging phenomenon of Hong Kong film spectatorship among young, urban, professional

<sup>38</sup> Terumoto, “Ajia no ren’ai eiga,” 98.

women. The ‘new’ Hong Kong cinema to which they flocked was at once cosmopolitan and “fashionable,”<sup>39</sup> a stark contrast with the 1980s kung-fu comedies of Jackie Chan. Two films in particular were credited with introducing this audience to an altogether more contemporaneous and globally competitive Hong Kong cinema than heretofore recognized in Japan: Wong Kar-wai’s *Chungking Express* (1994) and its ‘sequel’, *Fallen Angels* (1995) were widely recognized as transforming the image of Hong Kong films in Japan from tacky to trendy.

Yet, mass media accounts of the seemingly organic emergence of both this cinema and its female audience belied the calculated efforts of East Asia-oriented film critics and, in particular, fledgling film distributor Hiroko Shinohara to popularize Hong Kong films and filmmakers who fell outside the aegis of ‘mainstream’ genre films. Beginning as an informal project of a handful of Japanese film critics and industry insiders of bringing the comparatively esoteric films of the Hong Kong New Wave to Japan through small-scale Tokyo film festivals, it evolved from the late 1980s through the mid-1990s into one of deliberately articulating new Hong Kong cinema with Euro-American art and ‘indie’ films for the purpose of capitalizing on a lucrative audience of underserved female filmgoers.

The Japanese film industry of the late 1980s had all but abandoned the production of films targeted to women. The extensive penetration of television in Japanese households in the 1960s had resulted in declining numbers of filmgoers,<sup>40</sup> particularly among women who responded to the convenience of television and the variety of ‘home dramas’ that reflected their own experiences of family and home in

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<sup>39</sup> Ugaya, “Chūka poppu,” 34.

<sup>40</sup> Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, 208.

the postwar period.<sup>41</sup> As such programming gained a foothold among female television viewers, Japanese film industry giants Daiei and Shōchiku, which had produced the majority of *hahamono* (mother films), melodramas, and romances targeted to women in the postwar period, floundered; in 1971, the year that Daiei ceased film production, Shōchiku turned to the production of the more widely marketable and bankable *Otoko wa tsurai yo* (lit. “it’s tough being a man,” aka Tora-san) series.<sup>42</sup> While the occasional Tōhō romance still achieved box office success, by the beginning of the 1980s annual lists of the highest grossing Japanese films were overwhelmingly populated by Tora-san and yakuza films, children’s anime features, and idol vehicles aimed at a young female audience.<sup>43</sup> In other words, in the twenty years between 1960 and 1980, adult women ceased to be a significant demographic of the Japanese film industry. Moreover, the demise of the Japanese studio system meant that Japanese studios no longer had the capital necessary to cultivate and promote a wide variety of film stars. This resulted, in the 1970s, in the growing presence in Japanese films of more interchangeable idol singers and television personalities,<sup>44</sup> a situation that was only exacerbated as stars of the past retired, transitioned to television, or passed away.

For its part, Hollywood – having successfully weathered its own economic crises of the 1960s – remained a key player in the Japanese film marketplace, responsible for, on average, nearly half of all Japanese film revenues by the beginning

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<sup>41</sup> Hirahara, “Home Drama,” 133-136.

<sup>42</sup> Yomota, *Nihon eigashi 100 nen*, 161.

<sup>43</sup> “Sengo Nihon eiga,” 16-19.

<sup>44</sup> Yomota, *Nihon eigashi 100 nen*, 161.

of the 1980s.<sup>45</sup> However, with the exception of children's films, Japanese consumption of Hollywood and European films strongly mirrored that of domestic films. New Hollywood blockbusters, James Bond films, disaster epics, and big-budget adult films such as *Emmanuelle* (1974) and *Caligula* (1979) comprised the bulk of foreign box office successes in Japan during this period.<sup>46</sup> While melodramas such as *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979), *The Champ* (1979), and *Endless Love* (1981) were lucrative in the Japanese market, their success only highlighted the extent to which would-be female filmgoers were overlooked by the Japanese film industry.

In 1989, the number of theater screens in Japan dropped below 2,000 for the first time since their 1960 peak of nearly 7,500 screens,<sup>47</sup> and film attendance was also on a downhill slide. While remaining Japanese studios Shōchiku, Tōhō, and Tōei continued to produce films that brought viewers to movie theaters, their success relied increasingly on a system of block-booking that, as Mark Schilling observes,

literally [bought] a film's success. With advance ticket sales covering a major share of the film's production cost before release, quality became a secondary concern. Having already largely recouped their investment before their film opened, the producers could have screened a blank reel. (Given the films many of them ended up releasing, perhaps they should have).<sup>48</sup>

Japanese studios and distributors of Hollywood films alike increasingly relied on massive advertising campaigns to draw audiences; but, as reflected in dwindling attendance numbers, what filmgoers found in theaters failed to generate much lasting interest.

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<sup>45</sup> "1946-1984 Zenkoku kōgyō shūnyū," 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> "Sengo Nihon eiga," 16-19.

<sup>47</sup> Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan, Inc., <http://www.eiren.org/toukei/data.html>. (accessed November 10, 2010).

<sup>48</sup> Schilling, *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture*, 17.

Yet, film spectatorship itself was far from dead – it had simply relocated. By the mid-1980s, so-called ‘mini-theaters’ began cropping up around Japan’s urban centers. Small theaters generally seating under 200 patrons<sup>49</sup> and nestled within department stores or squeezed between office buildings on the back streets of Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe, mini-theaters thrived on low overheads and screenings of comparatively inexpensive films from Europe and the U.S.<sup>50</sup> Originally a site of Japanese experimental and independent film exhibition,<sup>51</sup> by the late 1980s mini-theaters became ensconced within Japanese consumer culture as corporations such as the Saison Group embarked on a strategic process of articulating a range of activities encompassing theater and concert attendance, art exhibition, shopping, and general *flânerie*, the better to capitalize on a newly moneyed demographic of young, urban, professional women.<sup>52</sup> As described by Karen Kelsky, by the 1980s “Japan’s prodigious economic resources [had] created a level of financial privilege obtained by Japanese women that enable[d] them to command a wide range of cosmopolitan experiences.”<sup>53</sup> Within Japan, such experiences were centered largely on the consumption of a wide array of goods and media from Europe and the United States, through which they became coeval participants in the circulation of transnational capital and culture.

Targeted specifically to “women who belonged to the post World War II baby boom generation because most of these young women were employed (until they got

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<sup>49</sup> Ōtaka, *Mini shiatāteki*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Terumoto, “Aija no ren’ai eiga,” 98.

<sup>51</sup> Roland Domenig, “The Anticipation of Freedom - Art Theatre Guild and Japanese independent cinema,” <http://www.midnighteye.com/features/art-theatre-guild.shtml>.

<sup>52</sup> Satō, “Organizational Identity,” 50-51.

<sup>53</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 17.

married and or had children) and they shopped after five o'clock by necessity,"<sup>54</sup>  
spaces such as Shibuya's sprawling Parco complex identified as their target clientele  
women who:

are light hearted and healthy and sound in thought.  
are interested in fashion but would not jump into the fad [sic] alone.  
can understand French chic and Japanese *iki* [coolness] as a feeling.  
admire mental and material richness; are attracted to intellectuality and a  
luxurious life.  
like European elegance and American pragmatism.  
have disposable income and are single or married, and engaged in office work.  
like the colors orange, light-green or gray.<sup>55</sup>

The vaguely European aura of such sites was echoed in the names of mini-theaters  
that peppered Tokyo: Cine Saison Shibuya, Cine Vivant Roppongi, Eurospace, Cine  
Chanter, and Bunkamura Le Cinema, among others. With hits in the late 1980s such  
as Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire* (1987), Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso*  
(1988), and Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989), the non-commercial  
sensibilities of which distinguished them from more mainstream fare, mini-theaters  
actively courted a self-consciously trendsetting, and overwhelmingly female,  
audience.<sup>56</sup>

Mini-theaters also were part of Tokyo's nascent film festival culture, of which  
Hong Kong films were a prominent, if badly outnumbered, feature from the inception  
of the Tokyo International Fantastic Film Festival in 1985. However, it was not until  
the 1988 Hong Kong Entertainment Film Festival (*Honkon entāteinmento*  
*eigasai*/HKEFF) and the Hong Kong Film Exposition (*Honkon den'ei paku*/HKFE) that

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>55</sup> Parco "Senden keikaku taikō" [Outline for Advertising Planning], translated and quoted in Satō, "Organizational Identity," 48.

<sup>56</sup> Imanishi et.al., "Mini shiatā no orijinaritei," <http://www2.ipcku.kansai-u.ac.jp/~mkt/em2002/m-r4.htm>. (accessed July 24, 2010).



programs devoted solely to Hong Kong cinema were screened for Japanese filmgoers. The Hong Kong Entertainment Film Festival was held in conjunction with the Japanese release of the Tōhō-Tōwa/Golden Harvest coproduction, *The Peacock King* (1988), and it featured films by director Ngai Kai-lam and co-director/star Yuen Biao, as well as a handful of other commercially successful films such as *Lucky Stars Go Places* (1987) and *Chocolate Inspector* (1986). Screenings were held over the course of six evenings (culminating in an all-night event) at the 2000-seat Shinjuku Bunka Cinema 2, and a promotional flyer for the festival both emphasized the films' commerciality and reinforced Japanese perceptions of Hong Kong cinema:

American movies have nothing on the powerful, exciting films [of Hong Kong], which overflow with ideas. The No. 1 producer of such Hong Kong films is "Golden Harvest"!! Responsible for introducing Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung Kinpo, and Yuen Biao to the world, they are the last word in kung-fu, Mr. BOO!, and *kyonshī* [films]. And they are the greatest global film company to come out of the East. What's more, this autumn will see the Japanese arrival of baby *kyonshī* and the SFX extravaganza *The Peacock King* will premiere over the New Year holiday. It is for the purpose of familiarizing and satisfying [Japanese viewers] with the essence of wholeheartedly entertaining Hong Kong films that Golden Harvest will present in December...the Hong Kong Entertainment Film Festival '88.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast, the Hong Kong Film Exposition, which took place several months before the HKEFF in the summer of 1988, screened a more eclectic mix of New Wave films including the internationally acclaimed Ann Hui work *Boat People* (1982), Allen Fong's *Just Like Weather* (1986), and Shu Kei's *Soul* (1986), together with more commercial fare such as an early John Woo comedy, *Laughing Times* (1980), the Anita Mui vehicle *Trouble Couples* (1987), and a derivative SFX fantasy, *Golden Swallow* (1988). In promotional materials for the HKFE, organizers went to pains to articulate

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<sup>57</sup> Program of the Hong Kong Entertainment Film Festival (1988).

films of the Hong Kong New Wave with international film (festival) culture. The Cannes Film Festival pedigree of *Boat People* was singled out for mention in the festival's commemorative program, in which it was also noted that the film had won awards in four categories of the Hong Kong Academy Awards. Similarly, a synopsis of *Soul* drew comparisons between that film and John Cassavetes's *Gloria* in their shared depictions of female empowerment. Where Western awards and antecedents were lacking those of other films were invoked, with the singularly undistinguished *Golden Swallow* described as capturing the "essence" of Tsui Hark's 1988 Avoriaz Fantastic Film Festival jury prize-winning *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1986).

Not only films, but the site of the Hong Kong Film Exposition contributed to its aura of vaguely cosmopolitan cinephilia. The HKFE was held at Shibuya's Parco Theater, a midsize hall whose construction had marked the first step in the commercialization of Japanese avant-garde theater.<sup>58</sup> The festival's Parco Theater locus effectively drew on the Saison Group's ideal clientele in articulating 'new' Hong Kong cinema with globalized female consumption; indeed, although the HKFE program showcased a diversity of contemporary Hong Kong cinema, it was the female-friendly, urban New Wave films *Just Like Weather* and *Soul* that were subsequently picked up for limited exhibition in Tokyo mini-theaters.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the festival's printed program was also pivotal in terms of (re)defining both Hong Kong cinema and its Japanese audience. A slender, hardcover volume containing detailed

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<sup>58</sup> Goodman, *Angura*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> *Just Like Weather*, which was the late show at Cine Vivant Roppongi in early October, 1988, told the story of a young couple adjusting to the challenges of married life. *Soul*, for which future Wong Kar-wai cinematographer Christopher Doyle won a Hong Kong Academy Award, was the late show at Cine Saison Shibuya throughout the same month (Hong Kong Film Exposition 1988 program, 63-4).

plot synopses, background information, and critical essays, its cover featured a replica of the festival's promotional poster, done in the style of Communist Chinese *nianhua* (New Year's poster) complete with chubby baby and assorted auspicious symbols (peacocks, fruit, clouds) (fig. 5). Where the baby would normally bear a carp or peach, symbolic of abundance and longevity,<sup>60</sup> the baby of artist Kotezawa Shinya's poster held forth a canister of film, the letters "HK" emblazoned behind him and elements of Hong Kong's distinctive skyline framing his head.



**Figure 5:** The Hong Kong Film Exposition program

In one sense, this image anticipated 1990s Communist kitsch popularized in Hong Kong in the period leading up to its 1997 reunification with China. In the

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<sup>60</sup> Landsberger, "New Year Prints (and chubby babies)," <http://chinese posters.net/themes/new-year-prints.php>. (accessed August 4, 2010).

Japanese context, it evoked the postmodern irony of artist Yokoo Tadanori's poster art, which repurposed imagery from Japan's early modern era in the service of advertising cultural events and commercial products.<sup>61</sup> *In toto*, the image both embodied, and interpellated its viewer in, an ironic postmodern sensibility; one that, paradoxically, was antithetical to the festival program itself, given the earnest modernity of its mix of New Wave and commercial films. Describing the contemporaneous emergence in Japan of "neo-Japonesque" style, Marilyn Ivy notes that its use of nostalgic imagery and typography "evokes...not a historical period but a free-floating past. Stripped of any tangible historical context, these cited moments of style operate as novel elements in the image repertoire of hip Japan."<sup>62</sup> In the same way, the HKFE poster art cannot be said to have represented the films screened throughout the festival itself so much as it posited a structure of feeling that could be expected to appeal to the self-consciously trendy; one that was at once international in its scope, yet lay claim to a specifically East Asian cosmopolitanism signified by its deployment of "nostalgia as style."<sup>63</sup>

If the Hong Kong Film Exposition generally redefined Hong Kong cinema and its Japanese audience as cosmopolitan, the 1989 Hong Kong New Cinema Fest (*Honkon nyū shinema fesu*/HKNCF) amplified and honed this message. Held at Cine Saison Shibuya and Shibuya Saison Seed Hall shortly following the Hong Kong Entertainment Film Festival and at the height of the New Year holiday, the HKNCF –

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<sup>61</sup> This similarity was made more explicit in the poster for the third Hong Kong Film Exhibition, held in 1991, which featured a Yokoo signature frame of flowers and Taisho 'roman'-style *kinbuntai* font.

<sup>62</sup> Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing*, 56.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

like the Hong Kong Film Exposition – was a conscious effort to disarticulate Hong Kong cinema from its Japanese stereotypes. As organizers explained in correspondence with Hong Kong producers and agents, “Even if Japanese people know about Hong Kong kung-fu or ghost movies, they know nothing about ‘real-time’, new Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s. Our festival aims to introduce Japanese people to the fresh, pop appeal of such films.”<sup>64</sup> The festival pamphlet echoed this imperative in its opening salvo: “Just because we’re in Japan, there’s no reason we should be saying ‘Hong Kong cinema? You mean *kyonshī*, or maybe Jackie Chan?’ The time has come for us to encounter even more interesting films.”<sup>65</sup>

In contrast with the HKFE, the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest made explicit its female orientation through its focus on three icons of ‘new’ Hong Kong cinema: director Ann Hui, and stars Chow Yun-fat and Cecilia Yip Tung. Emphasizing the breadth of films of “Hong Kong’s world-class female director,”<sup>66</sup> the pamphlet exhorted viewers to appreciate Hui’s depiction, in *Starry is the Night* (1988), of “a woman living for Hong Kong’s tomorrow,” noting that “the people she depicts survive without being defeated by whatever comes their way.”<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Cecilia Yip Tung’s work in the Louis Tan film *Infatuation* (1985) revealed the “merits of the liveliness of women who struggle, cry, and laugh,” the actress herself possessing a “strength and magnetism that no beautiful actress can match.”<sup>68</sup> In contrast with male-oriented fan publications that emphasized the beauty and sex appeal of such Hong Kong actresses

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<sup>64</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> Program for the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest (1989), 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

as Joey Wang, the focus in the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest on women persevering in the face of adversity – both on and off-screen – was one that resonated with the female audiences of such mainstream exemplars of female determination as the titular Oshin of public broadcaster NHK’s popular morning serial (1983-84). At the same time, this emphasis on women’s hardship and fortitude hinted at broader frustration with the “unapologetic gender discrimination” of Japanese workplaces and, more broadly, social expectations that were beginning to be vocalized in the latter half of the 1980s.<sup>69</sup>

The same text presented star Chow Yun-fat in an equally female-friendly light, describing him not as the anti-hero of countless neo-noir thrillers,<sup>70</sup> but as “our onscreen friend, lover, older brother, and our one and only love. This ‘King of Asian Cinema’ seems to have been born to be an actor, but his real appeal comes from his accumulated struggles and experiences. That’s why our hearts follow him.”<sup>71</sup> Works chosen by the festival programmers to represent Chow’s career reflected this perspective: the iconic Chow films *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), *City on Fire* (1987), and *Prison on Fire* (1987) were joined by Leong Po-chih’s historical melodrama *Hong Kong 1941* (1984), the Ann Hui political drama *The Story of Woo Viet* (1981), the comedy *Diary of a Big Man* (1988), and the Stanley Kwan film *Love Unto Waste* (1986).

While Hui, Yip, and Chow all made personal appearances at the festival, it was Chow whom festival programmer Hiroko Shinohara promoted to women’s magazine editors. In her 1998 memoir *Shinema tokkan musume* (Rushing cinema girl), Shinohara noted that her overtures to these editors eventually resulted in a bite from a

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<sup>69</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 85-6.

<sup>70</sup> For an example of this characterization in the Japanese film press, see Iwaida, Kitagami, and Nikaïdo, “Tokubetsu keikaku,” 107-115.

<sup>71</sup> Program for the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest (1989), 1.

“relatively young” editor at the women’s monthly, *Hanako*. Observing that “Chow Yun-fat is pretty good looking, isn’t he?” she offered Shinohara a two-page spread in her magazine in exchange for the opportunity to interview the star. This editor also granted Shinohara access to her own network of publishing contacts, resulting in about twenty write-ups about the festival featured primarily in women’s periodicals.<sup>72</sup>

More than any one Hong Kong film or star, it was Shinohara’s fledgling company, Prénom H,<sup>73</sup> which was responsible for the successful articulation of a fresh, female-friendly Hong Kong cinema with the trendsetting sensibilities of Tokyo’s young urbanites. First established for the purpose of centralizing planning and marketing activities for the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest,<sup>74</sup> Prénom H quickly became a clearinghouse for information and goods related to Hong Kong cinema and stars, in particular through its fan organization, the Yumcha<sup>75</sup> Club, as well as the distribution of its newsletter, *Honkon den’ei tsūshin* (Hong Kong movie times).

The newsletter, with an initial subscription of around 250 fans garnered largely from the audiences of the HKNCF,<sup>76</sup> featured interviews with popular Hong Kong stars and filmmakers by Japanese film critics and industry insiders who had long proselytized about the virtues of new Hong Kong cinema.<sup>77</sup> In the early years of the newsletter’s publication, the Hong Kong stars interviewed in its pages remained all

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<sup>72</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 32.

<sup>73</sup> Shinohara named the company Prénom H (*Purenon asshu*) in homage to the 1983 Jean-Luc Godard film, *Prénom Carmen* (Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 10).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>75</sup> “*Yumcha*” literally means “drink tea” in Cantonese, but colloquially refers to dim-sum dining.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>77</sup> Among those who contributed to *Honkon den’ei tsūshin* were long-time *Kinema jumpō* critic, and contributor to the festival pamphlets for both the Hong Kong Film Exhibition and the Hong Kong New Cinema Fest, Udagawa Yukihiro, Tokyo International Film Festival programmer and critic Teruoka Sōzō, film director Tsutsumi Takefumi, and film scholars Monma Takashi and Matsuoka Tamaki.

but unknown outside a small, if growing, group of dedicated Hong Kong film fans. However, their visibility in film festival and mini-theater programs, as well as their association with well-known Japanese film writers, accorded them an intellectual and artistic pedigree that resonated with Tokyo’s young, urban cinephiles.

Equally, *Honkon den’ei tsūshin* contributed to a woman-oriented, cosmopolitan structure of feeling through its deployment of illustrations that evoked not present-day Hong Kong, but the 1930s “Shanghai modern”<sup>78</sup> that constituted both the first flowering of East Asian cosmopolitanism and the last flowering of Chinese-Japanese cultural exchange prior to the onset of the Pacific War. Drawing on art deco design (fig. 6) and the iconic Shanghai modern girl (fig. 7), who herself derived from both Western and Japanese ‘*moga*’ (modern girl) influences of the 1920s and 30s,<sup>79</sup> these images built upon the stylish iteration of nostalgic East Asian cosmopolitanism seen in the HKFE program, making *Honkon den’ei tsūshin* both feminine and seemingly innocent of wartime and postwar histories. This was reinforced by both the fan club



**Figure 6:** Recurring illustration for the column “*Sēra no jintian de dianying.*”



**Figure 7:** Illustration for the monthly Yumcha Club column.

<sup>78</sup> Lee, *Shanghai Modern* (1999).

<sup>79</sup> Shih, *The Lure of the Modern*, 298.



name and its rendering on catalog sheets that were mailed with the newsletter, in which “kurabu” [倶楽部] was written in the Japanese phonetic, Chinese character transliteration of the English word “club”<sup>80</sup> (which returned to China as “*julebu*”), printed in a font reminiscent of the Taisho era (1912-1925) that witnessed the height of the Japanese *moga* phenomenon (fig. 8).



Figure 8: Cine City Hong Kong/Yumcha Club catalog header

Having thus articulated a women-oriented, trans-historical East Asian cosmopolitanism, Prénom H was positioned to capitalize on it through the marketing and, in particular, distribution of a specifically cosmopolitan iteration of Hong Kong cinema. Together with the more than 50 small, independent film distribution companies to emerge in 1990s Japan,<sup>81</sup> the distribution wing of Prénom H benefited from the emergence of not only mini-theaters, but also technologies of home viewership. As Muto Ki'ichi observes, the success and growth of the mini-theater circuit was itself dependent on the proliferation of film distribution windows made possible by the growth of the then-ancillary home video rental market as a means of recouping investment. Within this environment, small-scale distribution became the lowest financial threshold to participation in the film business in Japan.<sup>82</sup> As one such company, Prénom H began distributing films through the acquisition of Wong Kar-

<sup>80</sup> This is in contrast with its more typical rendering in *katakana*, the Japanese syllabary generally used for transliterating non-Chinese foreign language words [i.e.: クラブ].

<sup>81</sup> Muto, “Mini shiatā to shinekon,” 167.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

wai's 1990 film *Days of Being Wild*, the Japanese exhibition rights of which were purchased by Shinohara for US\$150,000.<sup>83</sup>

Released in Japan in 1992, *Days of Being Wild* was a dreamy, loosely-plotted slice of East Asian nostalgia that featured six of Hong Kong's most sought-after performers. These stars were introduced to Japanese audiences through the film's trailer, in which their names and representative films were superimposed over their images: Andy Lau (*As Tears Go By*), Tony Leung Chiu-wai (*City of Sadness*), Leslie Cheung (*A Better Tomorrow*), Carina Lau (*Rich and Famous*), Jacky Cheung (*Chinese Ghost Story II*), and Maggie Cheung (*Song of the Exile*). While esoteric in the broadest sense, these titles were familiar from mini-theater and festival programs, as well as video rental shelves. Their mention, alongside a somewhat hyperbolic description of Wong Kar-wai as "the world's most sought-after young film auteur," a full-screen list of the film's various awards and film festival appearances, and musical snippets from the film's decidedly un-Chinese (and, thus, all the more cosmopolitan) Xavier Cugat/Los Indios Tabajaras soundtrack, secured its status among Japanese cinephiles. In so doing, the trailer initiated the Prénom H project of overcoming the narrow definition of Hong Kong cinema that had heretofore dominated the Japanese imagination. Even the film's Japanese title, *Yokubō no tsubasa* (Wings of desire), was intended less to reflect the film itself than obliquely reference Wim Wender's highly successful mini-theater hit of the same (English) name.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 96.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 101. The Japanese title of Wenders's *Wings of Desire* was *Berurin tenshi no uta* (Berlin: song of the angel).

Ultimately, given the relative unfamiliarity of its cast and director, *Days of Being Wild* grossed a modest US\$124,000 at the Japanese box-office, a full US\$26,000 less than the price paid by Shinohara for the rights to its Japanese distribution. However, the film's true payoff came in the form of increased word-of-mouth for both Wong and Prénom H. Moreover, *Days of Being Wild* afforded Prénom H the opportunity to experiment with an approach to the marketing of Hong Kong films that emphasized their international pedigree and cosmopolitanism; an approach that was honed in publicity for the distributor's first hit, Wong's *Chungking Express*.

The sixth-highest grossing mini-theater film of 1995, *Chungking Express* took in US\$790,000 during its four-month Japanese run. According to Ōtaka Hiro, the film's skillful marketing played no small part in its Japanese success:

Although its predecessor, *Days of Being Wild*, was not very successful in the business sense, it had substantial power to penetrate [the market] and appealed widely to a youth-oriented [market] (its release to video was also significant). The foundation of Wong Kar-wai's popularity was laid with this film. We also cannot overlook the superlative publicity [for *Chungking Express*]. I saw the trailer for the film, with its indescribable coolness, multiple times...Through its intimate awareness of the film's appeal, the distributor demonstrated an impressive strategy for communicating that appeal.<sup>85</sup>

As with *Days of Being Wild*, the Japanese trailer for *Chungking Express* was comprised primarily of images and music, prefaced by glowing reviews of the film not from Japanese critics but the *New York Times* and *Village Voice*, the latter of which favorably compared Wong to American indie icon (and famous Asiaphile) Quentin Tarantino. In contrast with Hong Kong, European, and American trailers that utilized synthesizer music from the film's soundtrack, the Prénom H trailer made exclusive use of Faye Wong's Cantonese cover of the Cranberries hit "Dreams," heard in the film

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<sup>85</sup> Ōtaka, *Mini shiatāteki*, 40-41.

only briefly during the end credits. The song's mix of contemporary Western music and Cantonese language vocals set a pan-East Asian cosmopolitan tone matched by visuals from the film that stressed transnational mobility: a stewardess's pumps, flight information board, airplanes departing the harbor-bounded Kai-tak Airport, Faye Wong playing with toy airplanes. Hong Kong's teeming city streets, chrome escalators, and modern subways were intercut with images of Faye Wong's lovelorn naïf and Brigitte Lin's world-weary, postmodern moll, the two contrasted in a brief shot in which Lin, in Marilyn Monroe wig, crosses paths with Wong, carrying an oversized Garfield doll – each embodying an East Asian iteration of Western pop culture.

In this sense, and in contrast to *Days of Being Wild*, the Japanese trailer for *Chungking Express* advanced a wholly (post)modern cosmopolitan sensibility; one that, while drawing heavily from the film itself and echoing, to varying degrees, its other overseas trailers, was distinguished by the degree to which it was attuned to a specifically young, urban, female audience. Where French and American trailers for the film privileged images of Lin's sexy femme fatale, the Prénom H trailer centered on the film's two younger, cuter protagonists, played by Wong and Takeshi Kaneshiro, thus framing the film as light romance. Moreover, Wong's lovelorn waitress, with her pixie haircut, quixotic behavior, and conspicuously displayed purchases from popular (Japanese) department store Loft, mirrored one type of protagonist from Japanese *shōjo* (girls') manga and television drama, inviting transcultural identification from the film's would-be female audience. The film's Japanese title, *Koi suru wakusei* (*Loving planet*; i.e., a planet where loving occurs), as well as text superimposed over images at odd angles featuring paraphrased bits of dialogue from the film ("Six hours

later, she fell in love with him”), further reinforced the trailer’s emphasis of romance over mystery. Combined with images of the youthful Wong and Kaneshiro attempting to romance their respective would-be paramours, the cumulative effect of the *Prénom H* trailer was to convey a sensibility more attuned to then-trendy Japanese television dramas than either the noir world of the film’s French trailer or that of its action-packed Hong Kong trailer.

Further underscoring *Chungking Express*’s fashionability was the ancillary marketing of a film pamphlet printed on high-quality, color-saturated matte paper that included critical reviews of the film, interviews with Wong Kar-wai and Kaneshiro, a feature about the film’s Hong Kong locations, and a fully translated script of the film. This pamphlet mirrored the aesthetics and materials of that produced for the earlier *Days of Being Wild*, as did a set of postcards featuring star publicity photos and stills from the film, the quality of which made them collector’s items among Hong Kong film aficionados outside Japan (fig. 9).



**Figure 9:** The back of the *Chungking Express* pamphlet, with the stills that were used on collectible postcards.

Such marketing was affiliated with a broader move on the part of Prénom H to diversify its activities through the 1994 opening of film boutiques Cine City and Cine City Hong Kong in Tokyo's Aoyama fashion district. Initially housed on separate floors of the same building, Cine City and Cine City Hong Kong specialized in sales of not only in-house media and goods related to Prénom H-distributed films, but also European, American independent, and Chinese cinema-related books, CDs, posters, and videos. At the peak of its prosperity, Cine City Hong Kong boasted small retail outlets in Osaka's youth-oriented "Amemura" (America village) and in the Southern city of Fukuoka. Declining Japanese interest in Hong Kong cinema in the late 1990s led to the closure of these branches, and Tokyo's Cine City Hong Kong was relocated to the far end of the Cine City shop proper. There, it came to embody Prénom H's careful strategy of aligning Hong Kong and Western art cinemas. Posters for Wong Kar-wai films, five of which were ultimately distributed by Prénom H,<sup>86</sup> as well as for the urban romances of Hong Kong's United Filmmakers Organization (UFO), were displayed alongside advertising for DVD releases of Jean-Luc Godard and Jim Jarmusch films, while Japanese translations of *Cahiers du cinema* essays sat on bookshelves cover-to-cover with such volumes as Christopher Doyle's photo memoir of the filming of Wong's *Happy Together* (1997).

What had begun as a distribution center for Hong Kong film-related goods and media evolved, prior to its early 2000s demise, into the merchandising arm of Prénom

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<sup>86</sup> Prénom H was the initial distributor for Wong's films *As Tears Go By*, *Days of Being Wild*, *Chungking Express*, *Fallen Angels*, and *Happy Together*. Shinohara was given executive producer credit on *Happy Together*, and her name was listed as executive producer on commercially marketed poster mock-ups for the unmade feature, *Beijing Summer*. Wong's subsequent films received wider distribution through the networks of mainstream distributors Shōchiku (*In the Mood for Love*), Buena Vista (2046), and Asmik Ace (*My Blueberry Nights*), via the Tōhō theater circuit.

H devoted almost wholly to the films of Wong Kar-wai (and, subsequently, Taiwanese directors Tsai Ming-liang and Hou Hsiao-hsien). In one sense, this was a solid business strategy, as Wong's films were consistently bankable in Japan through the mid-2000s. Yet, in so doing, Prénom H effectively orchestrated its own decline, popularizing Wong's works to the extent that the independent distributor was no longer able to compete for the Japanese distribution rights to his films. Moreover, Prénom H diverged from what might be considered the mainstream of 1990s Hong Kong film fandom, the interests of which, while inclusive of Wong's works, reflected the broader genre- and star persona-bending characteristics of the Hong Kong film industry itself.

Throughout the 1990s, Prénom H successfully merged the cultural capital of Western art and indie cinema with an emergent discourse of popular pan-East Asian cosmopolitanism to advance an idea of 'new' Hong Kong cinema as fashionable to an audience of cinephiles and the trend-conscious. As a 1997 article in the widely circulated news weekly *Aera* retrospectively explained,

'95 and '96 are years that we should mark, as these are the years that Japanese awareness of Hong Kong popular culture completely changed. Chief [among the reasons] was that Wong Kar-wai's *Chungking Express* and *Fallen Angels* were big hits. Although a mini-theater film, *Fallen Angels*, released in June 1996, had a long half-year run. In Tokyo alone it attracted 70,000 viewers, setting a mini-theater record. Half of these moviegoers were in their 20s or younger; more than half were women....These two films, which stylishly depict young, single urbanites, erased stereotypes of *kyonshi*, kung-fu, and hardcore action from Hong Kong cinema. Wong Kar-wai's films, together with those of Tarantino (U.S.) or Luc Bresson (France) are in a category of 'fashionable films'.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ugaya, "Chūka poppu," 34.

The shift in Japanese mass media discourses of Hong Kong cinema from ‘*dasai*’ (tacky) to ‘*kakko ii*’ (cool) brought with it nascent awareness of a sizable, if not wholly visible, female fandom of Hong Kong cinema in Japan. Young, urban, professional female consumers had, by this time, become something of a trope in their own right within the Japanese mass media; as such, it was but a small step to comprehend its Japanese female fans through the lens of ongoing cultural conversations about both women’s means and patterns of consumption. In so doing, a rationale emerged for what might otherwise have been perceived as the irrational fannish behavior and practices of Hong Kong star fans.

### **Rational(ized) Passions**

The mid-1990s witnessed an exodus of Japanese women to Hong Kong that was captured in headlines dubbing them “The Japanese Runaways”<sup>88</sup> and broadcasting “Despite Low Pay, Hong Kong Jobs Lure Women: Greater Responsibility, Chance to Use English Add to Exotic Aura of Working Abroad.”<sup>89</sup> Such proclamations linked women’s migration to Hong Kong with a broader phenomenon of female ‘internationalism’, identified by Karen Kelsky as a mode of “‘defection’ from expected life courses” enacted through employment with foreign companies in Japan, overseas study and employment, and relationships with foreign men among a segment of young, urban, professional Japanese women.<sup>90</sup> An overwhelmingly West-centered phenomenon, Kelsky argues that the emergence of an East Asian iteration of

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<sup>88</sup> Chan, “The Japanese Runaways,” 3.

<sup>89</sup> Itabashi, “Despite Low Pay,” 18.

<sup>90</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 2.



internationalist discourse in the mid-1990s was linked to “the ‘Westernized’ aspects of these sites.”<sup>91</sup> Yet, while Hong Kong, in particular, exerted a potent semiotic lure in Japan based on its alternative experience of East-West relations,<sup>92</sup> East Asia-directed female internationalism also coincided with the rise of discourses of Japanese ‘Asianization’ that were themselves closely tied to the growing popularity of Asian music and movies in Japan. That women, in the Hong Kong context, fuelled this popularity suggests a link between female internationalism and Asian popular culture fandom reinforced by mass media characterization of Hong Kong cinema as ‘fashionable’.

This discursive web was encapsulated in the 2002 Yamada Taichi made-for-television drama, *Honkon myōjōmei* (Hong Kong star fans). Invoking his penchant for narratives foregrounding tensions between the professional and personal lives of company employees, Yamada told the story of Tokyo career woman Kudō Satomi (Yakushimaru Hiroko), the executive manager of Asian regional marketing for a French shoe manufacturer. Having achieved an enviable degree of professional autonomy, Satomi longs to regionalize design operations, arguing that East Asian women appreciate a different aesthetic than European women. Yet, her ideas are repeatedly rejected by her company’s Eurocentric management, leaving Satomi frustrated and her talents untapped.

Chief among Satomi’s consolations is her fandom of Hong Kong star Ekin Cheng. Following the rebuff of her ideas at work, she embarks on a quick trip to Hong Kong for the purpose of attending an invitation-only birthday party for Cheng at

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>92</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization*, 194-8.

which he is scheduled to make an appearance. While in Hong Kong, she finds herself in the company of two women: Ōnuma Akane (Muroi Shigeru), a middle-aged housewife excited to be on her first fannish trip to Hong Kong, and Shibasaki Keiko (Yamamoto Mirai), a former professional rival and closet Ekin Cheng fan. Despite Satomi's initial animosity towards her fellow Japanese fans, the three inadvertently encounter one another outside Cheng's luxury apartment building and are briefly united in concern for the star when they learn of his hospitalization in Shanghai. Later, arriving at the event, they learn that his party has been postponed indefinitely and, leaving flowers for Cheng with the event organizers, the trio retreats to a nearby restaurant. There, they are approached by one of Cheng's entourage who, recognizing them from earlier, says in Japanese that the star has arrived and wants to thank them for their gift. Cheng sheepishly appears in pajamas and overcoat, and Satomi and Keiko excitedly address him in Cantonese, translating for the monolingual Akane. After several minutes, Cheng excuses himself, and the group subsequently return to Japan and their disparate lives.

Back in Tokyo, the women's extra-ordinary enjoyment of Hong Kong is underscored by glimpses into the mundanity of their lives: Keiko is shown working listlessly at a desk in an anonymous securities firm, while Satomi encounters Akane sitting alone on a bench in a small park, smoking a cigarette and postponing the inevitable moment when she must return home to care for her ailing mother-in-law. For these two women, fandom constitutes an escape from the dissatisfactions and drudgery of everyday life, liberating them from the professional and private roles they are obliged to perform. In contrast, albeit to similar effect, Satomi uses her fandom as

a cover for her clandestine attempts to woo a Chinese shoe designer whom she hopes will strengthen her case for East Asian-designed footwear. When her gamble fails, Satomi is dismissed from the French company for her insubordination of company policy. Ultimately, however, she is approached by an old friend and former lover who, having learned of her situation, offers her work in his company, sweetening the deal with an assurance that her Hong Kong designer is also on board. This happy news arrives almost simultaneously with that announcing Ekin Cheng's recovery and the rescheduling of his birthday party, and the drama concludes with the three fans reunited in Hong Kong, delightedly cheering a singing Cheng.

Throughout the drama, Satomi, Keiko, and – to a lesser extent – Akane each engage in self-recriminations for their fandom, repeatedly speaking to their embarrassment at being such passionate fans at their age. Satomi and Keiko, in particular, go to great pains to hide their fannish activity from professional colleagues: Keiko slinks around airports in Japan and Hong Kong in oversized sunglasses, while Satomi keeps her stash of Ekin Cheng-related paraphernalia hidden from view even within the privacy of her own home. Rather than contesting the need for such obfuscations, the narrative trajectory of *Honkon myōjōmei* instead rationalizes these women's unseemly fannish excess through its depiction as symptomatic of deeply felt dissatisfactions with the gender constraints of Japanese women's personal and professional lives. A means to an end, rather than an end in itself, their fandom affords them a temporary respite from the unceasing demands of women's workaday lives and, at best, provides a jumping-off point from which they may remake themselves.

This characterization of Hong Kong star fandom in Japan was not merely the conceit of one screenwriter, but one that gained traction within the Japanese mass media throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. Mass media discourse surrounding the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong popular culture was based on a perception – shared with West-oriented internationalist women – of fans as single, urban, professional women in their 20s and 30s, whose independence from the constraints of mainstream corporate and family life afforded them both the time and money with which to pursue their extracurricular interests. As reported in a 1997 *Shunbun bungei* essay, women were well-positioned to indulge in fannish activity and, in the case of transcultural fandoms, travel “precisely because of the monetary reserves of single OLs [office ladies].”<sup>93</sup> This perception was reinforced in a 2002 essay appearing in the newsweekly *Aera*, in which it was observed that ‘older’ female popular culture fans

are efficient workers who have built a surplus of time and money. The period in their lives when they can expect to relax and seek out their next game [*asobi*] without destroying their lifestyle coincides with a relaxing of the constraints of being the best. This [period] is their 30s. That may be why career-minded thirtysomethings have awakened to the pleasures of unexpected fandom.<sup>94</sup>

What is noteworthy about these two observations is less the rationale they offer for the rise of star fandoms among Japanese women, than the subtle shift from a discourse of parasitic ‘OL’ autonomy and consumerism, in which young, single women living with family utilized their salaries in the single-minded pursuit of their own interests, to one of deserved emancipation from social expectations. The latter accorded women

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<sup>93</sup> Hanaoka, “Kokusaiteki okkake,” 62.

<sup>94</sup> Irokawa, “Barikyari,” 48.

the freedom to pursue interests that might be deemed frivolous by others, as long as they met exacting standards of uncomplaining hard work and thrift.

This discursive shift is particularly significant when contrasted to the derision historically directed at female fans. Female fandom of popular culture in Japan is overwhelmingly personality-based, centering on kabuki stars, luminaries of the all-female Takarazuka theatrical troupe, the 'Johnny's' boy-band idols of producer Johnny Kitagawa, television actors, and *enka* (folk song) stars, in addition to Western film and music celebrities. As Jennifer Robertson has noted, the passion brought to star-centered interests and fan activity, including attendance at public performances and 'okkake' (star-chasing), has been subjected to pathologization by both journalists and cultural critics.<sup>95</sup> Despite this – or perhaps as a result – in the domestic context fannish passions have been comparatively easy to control through both fan acquiescence to heavily scripted star-fan encounters and the self-policing of fan communities themselves.<sup>96</sup> It is when fan interest exceeds the agreed-upon parameters of star-fan engagement that fans attract the attention of media commentators; if such interest intersects with a potentially disruptive personality or phenomenon, as in the case of the early female fandom of female *otokoyaku* [male role] stars of Takarazuka, it is often accorded the qualities of a contagion.<sup>97</sup>

Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars were as susceptible to such discourse as any other, and, indeed, it was partly this perception of Jackie Chan's 1980s female fandom that precipitated his segregation from the subsequent discourse of Japanese

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<sup>95</sup> Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 152.

<sup>96</sup> Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, 72.

<sup>97</sup> Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 152.

fandom of Hong Kong stars. As late as 2002, the abovementioned *Aera* essay on Japanese female fandoms attributed women's willingness to spend their (prodigious) free time and hard-earned cash in the pursuit of contact with favorite stars to an "allergy" affecting otherwise normal, high-achieving career women.<sup>98</sup> Yet, it was precisely this intersection of otherwise typical star fandom with women's well-publicized drive for professional success and frustrations with the gender status quo that afforded both fans and their media interlocutors a means of articulating fandom with internationalist discourses of defection.

In one sense, internationalist fandom gave women a way of talking about their fandom that was immune to outside criticism and, when effectively deployed, cast fans in a vaguely progressive, feminist light. For these women, the Hong Kong they discover circuitously through Hong Kong cinema is, in Kelsky's words, a "new self" that is the embodiment of "a woman's natural abilities and desires 'freed' from or discovered under layers of oppressive tradition. The finding of the new self is on the order of a revelation, a vindication of values that had been ridiculed or suppressed in Japan."<sup>99</sup> In the Hong Kong film fan context, this 'new self' found its most complete articulation in the memoir of Prénom H CEO Hiroko Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume* (Rushing cinema girl), which was on the polished end of what Kelsky describes as "a popular genre of informal, minimally edited autobiographical accounts by ordinary young women who ha[d] no other literary qualification than their personal experience of quitting an OL job in Japan to study, work, or reside abroad."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Irokawa, "Barikyari," 46-48.

<sup>99</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 121-2.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

In a sub-chapter tellingly entitled “Divorce, resignation from work, and looking for a new starting point at age 29,”<sup>101</sup> Shinohara succinctly captured the main tropes of discontentment and self-actualization that characterize women’s internationalist narratives:

At that point in my life, I was looking for work that I could devote myself to heart and soul, work that would span my lifetime. At the very least, I wanted to be able to make a living doing work that I enjoyed...so I quit my job of seven years at Seibu Department Store. At the same time, I also typed a period on my four-year marriage, freeing myself from the gender role of wife.<sup>102</sup>

Turning first to freelance and part-time work, Shinohara met in her spare time with a group of fortuitously well-connected cinephiles, including several critics and mini-theater managers. It was through this group that she first encountered films of the Hong Kong New Wave, and together the small coterie embarked on a trip to Hong Kong dubbed “The Hong Kong Sumptuous Feast (*shuchinikurin*) Tour” in September 1987, with the intention of becoming further acquainted with Hong Kong cinema. The tour marked Shinohara’s first trip to the territory, and she described the urban chaos of Hong Kong in the same terms of fulfillment as the women above, observing that

The minute I set foot in Hong Kong, its energy seemed to send a charge of electricity throughout my body. Right next to luxury hotels stood stalls selling pig heads, noses, and feet. This city, which seemed so far removed from orderliness, was filled with people...At crosswalks, even if the signal was still red, they moved out into the street oblivious of passing cars, banging their hands on the hoods to stop them as they crossed. They fearlessly ignored traffic signals, those objects of social order...[seeing this] I felt that this was a society that valued people over systems.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 18.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-1.

Ultimately, the revelation of Shinohara's 'new self' comes during the tour's marathon screenings of Hong Kong films:

Everything was fresh and new, and we discovered that there were dozens of actors as charismatic as Tony Leung, Leslie Cheung, Chow Yun-fat, Yip Tong. As I watched these films, I realized – like a shock of electricity running through my body – that even though we're all Asians, these people revealed that they live by a different logic, a different mentality.<sup>104</sup>

Shinohara's transformation is inextricably linked with Hong Kong cinema and stars, the discovery of which she describes as her "life work."<sup>105</sup>

Hewing closely to the discourse of women's internationalist emancipation from Japanese social, gender, and professional constraints, the experiences of such women paint a picture of personal and professional fulfillment as the end result of a journey beginning in Hong Kong film spectatorship. In this sense, their narratives of transcultural media fandom recall Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's argument that "transnational spectatorship can...mold a space of future-oriented desire, nourishing the imaginary of 'internal émigrés', actively crystallizing a sense of a viable 'elsewhere', giving it a local habitation and a name, evoking a possible 'happy end' in another nation."<sup>106</sup> While Shohat and Stam here refer primarily to the emancipatory possibilities of visual texts, their thesis might apply equally to the extratextual potential of transcultural media fandom in fostering that same "liminal space of dreams and self-fashioning"<sup>107</sup> that characterizes women's internationalist narratives in Japan.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>106</sup> Shohat & Stam, "From the Imperial Family," 164-5.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 165.



Kelsky observes of West-centered internationalism that “within women’s narrative universe, the community of the West, to be effective as an escape, must exclude Japanese males.”<sup>108</sup> In the context of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, it is here that the specifically East Asian inflection of women’s internationalist discourse is most visible. In magazine articles by well-connected ‘big name fans’,<sup>109</sup> such exclusion takes the form of the implicit critique of Japanese men through the valorization and, arguably, fetishization of Hong Kong men. Depictions of otherwise plebian Hong Kong stars through the lens of what might be termed internationalist Asianism contrasted them favorably to the simultaneously juvenile and jaded male stars of the Japanese entertainment industry – and, by extension, Japanese men in general. As noted by novelist Koike Mariko in a 1996 *Sankei shimbun* article, “women’s aesthetic sense is piqued by the exoticism and kind of nihilistic aura [of Hong Kong stars] that Japanese lack.”<sup>110</sup>

A 1996 *Cosmopolitan* (Japan) essay by manga artist and high-profile president of the Japanese Leon Lai fan club Murata Junko<sup>111</sup> was particularly critical of the “fake Westernness” of “handsome, but shallow” Japanese stars, citing this as one reason for

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<sup>108</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 128.

<sup>109</sup> The term “big name fans” typically refers to ordinary fans who have risen to prominence within a fan community, on the basis of fan production, media industry connections, or other kinds of expertise. In the context of the Japanese fandom of Hong Kong stars, it refers to fans who are themselves part of the popular cultural landscape through work as novelists, journalists, manga authors, etc.

<sup>110</sup> Aoki, “Otona no josei ni ukeru Honkon eiga,” online.

<sup>111</sup> Given her exposure in the Japanese press (as well as academic writing) in the 1990s, Murata emerged as something of a self-appointed representative of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars. Her ongoing interest in Leon Lai was the subject of a 2003 *Josei seibun* article, the title of which – “*Hitome aitasa ni 1000 man-en – dare ka watashi o tomete!!*” [I spent 10 million yen just to look [at him] – someone stop me!!] – signaled a return to the discourse of excess common to most mass media accounts of female fandom in Japan.

her turn towards the raw masculinity of male Hong Kong stars.<sup>112</sup> Murata, together with journalist Hashimoto Mitsue, pressed this point further in a 1997 *Elle-Japon* article in which they contrasted Hong Kong stars with both their Western and Japanese counterparts:

Interest in Hong Kong and Asian entertainers isn't limited to a handful of crazy fans, but is spreading among ordinary young women. Particularly women who are attuned to changing times, and who wince at the weakness of metrosexualized Japanese man-boys, sense a sexuality in Asian men – who have become cool and beautiful alongside their growing economies – that is lacking in Japanese men....Onscreen they are wild and manly. They are uncomplainingly strong and patiently gentle to women....Their gentle faces have the smoothness of hard-boiled eggs, their disciplined muscles are hardened, their broad chests on par with Westerners. But they are most certainly not hirsute. To us, this is the ideal male body. What many Japanese women hate isn't muscles but bodily hair.<sup>113</sup>

The reference here to “hard-boiled eggs” recalls Kelsky’s description of a scene in novelist Nonaka Hiragi’s *Chocolate Orgasm* (1993), in which the term is used unflatteringly to refer to Japanese men’s physique: “the character of Kazuhiko, the only Japanese male to figure in the novel, first appears poolside, with his swimming cap ‘pulled down almost to his shoulders,’ looking ‘just like a boiled egg...with his smooth hairless face’ (54).”<sup>114</sup> In this sense, Murata and Hashimoto’s implicit thesis appears to be that female fans of Hong Kong stars were all the more cutting-edge for their rejection of both immature Japanese *and* uncouth Western men in favor of the exotic, genteel masculinity of ‘Asian’ men.

Not only heterosexual desire, but also cross-cultural identification is credited for the appeal of Hong Kong stars to Japanese women, as in journalist Chieko

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<sup>112</sup> Kobayashi, “Honkon mūbī,” 26.

<sup>113</sup> Hashimoto & Murata, “Rinrinshiku otoko,” 95.

<sup>114</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 183.

Kobayashi's observation that Hong Kong stars "have the same black hair and the same black eyes [as us]," making them "feel closer to us than Hollywood [stars]."<sup>115</sup> Hara

Tomoko takes this one step further in her own observation that

One key reason [that women become fans of Asian idols] is perhaps that, for the last several years, cultural exchange between Asian nations has progressed briskly....Because of this, in Asian countries where a Western orientation dominated, awareness of other Asian cultures has occurred. And there is no mistaking that it has been women who have responded to this trend with the greatest sensitivity. The pressure to marry is gone, they are not required to enlist in the armed forces, and young women with their own money are, within Asia, the group that is enjoying the greatest freedom.<sup>116</sup>

Articulating a pan-Asian female fandom of not only Hong Kong stars, but also those of Japan, Taiwan, and, in particular, South Korea with Japanese internationalist discourse, Hara implicitly aligns Japanese women with their (cosmopolitan) East and Southeast Asian counterparts in a feminist argument for women's innate Asian orientation.

Here, Japanese 'Asianization', with all its ambivalent history, is within the purview of female consumers, the social legitimacy of which acts as a mode of "auto-legitimation"<sup>117</sup> on the part of fans that deftly elides the mass media pathologization of fandom through its appeal to a cosmopolitan regionalism.

Yet, it is the *effectiveness* of such a discourse of fannish auto-legitimation as a means of deflecting negative attention in the mass media that begs the question of its underlying semiotic function within the Japanese context. Here too, Yamada's drama effectively illustrates the contradictions of female fans' internationalist Asianism.

Satomi's desire, in *Honkon myōjōmei*, to regionalize the design of shoes marketed to East Asian women overlays popular contemporary discourse of Japan's role within the

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<sup>115</sup> Kobayashi, "Honkon mūbī," 14.

<sup>116</sup> Hara, *Honkon chūdoku*, 17.

<sup>117</sup> Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 38.

East Asian (cultural) sphere. She envisions herself as an intermediary between her European employers and the unconnected, resolutely 'Asian' designer she discovers in Hong Kong, her unique ability to communicate effectively with both belying the assumption that neither can communicate effectively without her. In this way, Satomi unwittingly reflects "Japan's mission as a mediating leader"<sup>118</sup> within the East Asian regional context, a characteristic of the Japanese regional imagination since before its wartime project of pan-East Asian cooperation and expansion. As Iwabuchi argues, in its contemporary iteration, this role "is not necessarily motivated by reactive or chauvinistic sentiment."<sup>119</sup> Rather, he suggests, "Japan's [Asian] homecoming has...less to do with its will to become an interlocutor among neighbors than with its narcissistic search for a Japanese national identity."<sup>120</sup>

In the post-bubble period of the 1990s, this search took the form of attempts to redefine Japanese economic and cultural identity within an East Asian context. Heretofore secure in its identity as a Western-styled economic powerhouse, the recession that began in the early 1990s spurred a reevaluation on the part of Japanese intellectuals of Japan's roles – cultural as well as economic – within both the regional and global contexts.<sup>121</sup> This soul-searching coincided with the rise of the so-called 'dragon economies' of East and Southeast Asia (South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) that produced an Asianist discourse of Confucian commonality,<sup>122</sup> a

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<sup>118</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 14.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Ching, "Globalizing the Regional," 255.

<sup>122</sup> Kaji, "Japan and the Confucian Cultural Sphere," 74-78.

vague “Asian spirit,”<sup>123</sup> and neo-conservative ideas of the superiority of “Asian values”<sup>124</sup> over those of the debauched West that gained widespread legitimacy in Japan. Within this environment, it was argued that the inter-regional flow of television, movies, and music at best “challeng[ed] Japan’s persistent stereotypes of other Asian peoples and cultures, and tr[ie]d to encourage the re-establishment of a Japanese identity within an Asian context.”<sup>125</sup> In this vein, Japanese commentary on Hong Kong cinema credited its surging popularity throughout East Asia to not only structural and historical advantages (chief among them its appeal to diasporic audiences), but also to a unique “vitality”<sup>126</sup> that contrasted starkly with the stagnation of Japan’s own (popular) culture. Within both the popular and trade press, detailed analyses of the underlying attractions of Hong Kong cinema<sup>127</sup> accompanied essays and roundtables in which Japanese critics argued that the Hong Kong film industry might serve as a model for the revival of the then-lackluster Japanese film industry along (ill-defined) ‘Asian’ lines.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ogura, “A Call for a New Concept of Asia,” 41.

<sup>124</sup> Ishihara and Mahathir, *The Voice of Asia* (1996).

<sup>125</sup> Tochigi, “Commercial and Ideological Factors,” 14.

<sup>126</sup> Tanigaki, “Honkon eiga wa naze,” 234.

<sup>127</sup> “Den’ei nyū shinema (Electric shadows),” *Image Forum* 103, November 1988; “Tokubetsu kikaku: Honkon nowāru (Special project: Hong Kong noir),” *Kinema Junpō*, July 15, 1989; Tobar Haruo and Ōkubo Kenichi, “Omoshiro Honkon eiga no shiriasu na kakushiaji (The serious subtle flavor of interesting Hong Kong films),” *Chishiki*, May, 1989; “Taiwan Honkon shin eiga sengen (Taiwan-Hong Kong New Cinema),” *Wave* 21, Jan. 25, 1989; “Honkon eiga kai wa ima ga, jun! (Now is the time for the Hong Kong film world!)” *Kinema Junpō*, June 15, 1990; Tanigaki Mariko, “Honkon eiga wa naze ‘kokusaika’ ga dekita ka (How did Hong Kong cinema internationalize?),” *Sekai* (December 1993): 228-234.

<sup>128</sup> Udagawa, et.al. (March 15, 1992), “Honkon 1992 rondo suru eigatachi”; Udagawa (July 1987), “Honkon eiga’ o hirogeta sakkatachi”; Ōkubo, et.al. (May 1990), “Taiwan-Honkon-Tairiku-Nihon atarashī eigazukuri e Higashi Ajia no nettowāku o kumu.”

Japanese prescriptions for the “Asianization”<sup>129</sup> of its national cinema thus dovetailed with concurrent discourses of more far-reaching Japanese political and economic ‘Asianization’ that emerged in the wake of the bubble economy of the 1980s. As exemplified in journalist Yōichi Funabashi’s assessment of the various ties being forged between ‘Asian’ nations in the early 1990s, the emerging Asian popular cultural *mélange* was cause for celebration:

The cultural links between the middle classes of various Asian countries are strengthening through the power of electronic communications technology. Asia, which lacks a common heritage of aristocratic classes and culture, has increasingly become a hotbed of middle-class globalism. The Hong Kong-based Star Television Network was quick to create an Asia-wide entertainment network. On its broadcasts, top-selling Thai or Japanese singers croon the hit songs of Hong Kong or Guangdong. Under pressure from Star TV, Indian Public Television has fought back by broadcasting Japan’s hit drama series, “Oshin,” now shown in 30 countries, most of them in Asia. A Japanese children’s cartoon whose popularity is now exploding in Vietnam is “Doraemon,” about a group of contemporary children and their robot playmate.<sup>130</sup>

In her analysis of women’s internationalist discourse, Kelsky observes that, in spite of the ways in which it “construct[s] an alternative reality under which all that had been maligned is now revered, and all that had been revered now rejected...ironically, invocation of female international ‘adaptability’ has...become talismanic in the mainstream, male-dominated Japanese media.”<sup>131</sup> She attributes the mainstream embracing of this otherwise counter-hegemonic discourse to the ways in which it “deflect[s] onto women the distasteful imperative of internationalization.”<sup>132</sup> Similarly, mass media characterization of Hong Kong film and star fans through a discourse of

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<sup>129</sup> Tochigi, “Commercial and Ideological Factors,” 12.

<sup>130</sup> Funabashi, “The Asianization of Asia,” 78-79.

<sup>131</sup> Kelsky, *Women on the Verge*, 119.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

women's internationalist Asianism was a means by which broad claims of deepening (popular) cultural ties with 'Asia' could be made by those bearing none of the onus of such work. Within its depiction in the press, fan activity effectively constituted a 'soft' Asianization that satisfied a fleeting engagement with Japan's regional neighbors.

Such engagement, in turn, became a key component of the critique of Japanese popular cultural Asianism, with which the female fandom of Hong Kong stars was aligned.<sup>133</sup> Detractors questioned its progressive potential, framing their criticism in terms of a tension between 'authentic' encounters between Japanese and other East/Southeast Asians and the commodified "pseudoexperiences"<sup>134</sup> of young, affluent Japanese consumers. In 1993, former bureaucrat and intellectual Ogura Kazuo complained that one impediment to the notion of a redefined 'Asia' was

the tendency of some members of Asia's young cultural elites to continue to view their part of the world from the old Western perspective. When they turn their eyes to Asia, they see it as an exotic place with numerous features that, paradoxically, strike them as being "fresh." These Asians are actually quite ignorant of Asia and had no interest in it until quite recently, and their ignorance has ironically made Asia look new and full of interest to them.<sup>135</sup>

For its detractors and skeptics, the key conflict of Japanese popular Asianism hinged on perceptions of the inauthenticity of its media(ted) consumption of people and places, largely by means of touristic practices of media spectatorship that offered fantasy in place of the realities of life in non-Japanese East and – in particular – Southeast Asia.

A telling example of this is found in the scholarly critique of Japanese director Iwai Shunji's 1996 multicultural indie epic, *Swallowtail Butterfly*, which capitalized on

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<sup>133</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization*, 181-194.

<sup>134</sup> Yomota, "Stranger than Tokyo," 83.

<sup>135</sup> Ogura, "A Call for a New Concept of Asia," 43.

popular conceptions of Japanese social decay and ‘Asian’ vigor in telling the tale of so-called “Yentowns,” the Asian denizens of a liminal slum on the outskirts of an anonymous Japanese megalopolis. Popular among audiences both within and outside Japan, *Swallowtail* attained a special notoriety among scholars of Japanese film for its apparent, and politically problematic, emphasis of style over substance. In a scathing description of the film, Yomota Inuhiko observed that “in *Swallowtail*...Chinese illegal laborers and prostitutes build a utopian community, but this is depicted by the film’s Japanese performers as a game...there is no sense of the film’s intention of approaching the ‘other’ in a fresh way, because everything takes place within the predetermined parameters of a theme park.”<sup>136</sup> In a similar vein, Aaron Gerow argued that the film was dominated by a “tourist/consumer gaze, the new identity offered for young Japanese through which they can simultaneously consume and silence the Asian Other, venture abroad while never being threatened as Japanese.”<sup>137</sup> Eric Cazdyn’s 2002 critique of the film pointed to the film’s usurpation of the aesthetics of avant-garde cinema of a former age in “a dialectical inversion of the modernist paradigm,”<sup>138</sup> whose purpose, he argued, was to distract from, rather than invoke understanding of, the serious social issues skirted by the film’s narrative. According to Cazdyn, it was the “new historical moment and different reception habits [that] transformed [the] meanings and effects [of avant-garde aesthetics]. Instead of prodding Japanese spectators to see how their fetishization of foreigners (the darker, poorer, and more abused the better, but always physically attractive) reinforced the

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<sup>136</sup> Yomota, *Nihon eiga no radeikaru na ishi*, 467.

<sup>137</sup> Gerow, “Consuming Asia, Consuming Japan,” 89.

<sup>138</sup> Cazdyn, *The Flash of Capital*, 161-2.



investment in the Japanese-non-Japanese binary, Iwai's *Swallowtail Butterfly* only lulls its audience into admiring the freakish editing and curious camera work of a cinematic *wunderkind*.<sup>139</sup>

My purpose here is not to evaluate the merits – or lack thereof – of Iwai's film,<sup>140</sup> but to point out commonalities between its critique and that of the internationalist Asianism of the Hong Kong female fandom. In his own assessment of *Swallowtail*, Iwabuchi, with Yomota, Cazdyn, and Gerow, argues that “in spite of its attempt at representing multicultural chaos in Japan...strikingly absent in the film is any ‘real’ encounter between Japanese citizens and the Asians.”<sup>141</sup> Iwabuchi's identification of the film's lack of “real” encounters anticipates his subsequent observation of the female fans of Hong Kong stars that, “unlike women who have ‘real’ contacts with Asian men and immigrate to other Asian nations through international marriage, these Japanese fans seem less concerned with transforming their lives by actually leaving Japan or encountering cultural others in the form of non-Japanese men in real situations.”<sup>142</sup> Observing that even though their fandom “presents Japanese female fans with an opportunity to rethink the idea that Japan is superior to Hong Kong and to judge this view not just politically incorrect but also emotionally and culturally untrue,”<sup>143</sup> this realization is achieved by “reducing Hong Kong to a

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 162-3.

<sup>140</sup> For alternative perspectives on *Swallowtail*, see Lori Hitchcock, “Third Culture Kids: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Language and Multiculturalism in *Swallowtail Butterfly*,” *Scope: An On-Line Journal of Film Studies* (February 2004), and Colleen Laird, “Japanese Cinema, the Classroom, and *Swallowtail Butterfly*,” *Jump Cut* 52 (Summer 2010).

<sup>141</sup> Iwabuchi, “Nostalgia for a (Different) Asian Modernity,” 553.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 564-5.

convenient and desirable Asian other”<sup>144</sup> through which fans bypass concrete engagement with ‘real’ Hong Kong men in their own process of self-actualization. Women may, through their consumption of Hong Kong films and stars, enter into a “self-reflexive praxis”<sup>145</sup> born of their observations of Hong Kong’s alternative mediascape, but this never exceeds what Iwabuchi terms “armchair engagement with Hong Kong modernity.”<sup>146</sup> Ostensibly critiquing the 1990s Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong films and stars, what Iwabuchi here actually deconstructs is less the fandom itself than the discourses through which it was understood outside fannish circles. While not disputing women’s own deployment of the discourse of internationalist Asianism in justifying their interest in Hong Kong cinema and stars to scholarly and media interlocutors, I have argued that their motivations for doing so were based as much – if not more – in the recognition of its broad acceptability within Japan, as in their fetishization of a commodified Hong Kong Other.

## **Conclusion**

The opening scenes of the 1999 film *Moumantai* juxtapose two competing discourses of Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong cinema within the actual confines of the Cine City film paraphernalia shop: that of Jackie Chan’s female fandom, and the ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong cinema produced and promoted largely through distribution company Prénom H’s multifaceted tactics of marketing Wong Kar Wai’s early *oeuvre*. I have interrogated the origins of these discourses, tracing that of the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 567.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 565.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 568.

Jackie Chan fandom to attempts by Chan's own promoters to articulate the Hong Kong star with the Japanese pop idols popular among young girls and women in the 1980s, for the purposes of capitalizing on this lucrative audience. In distinguishing what they termed 'new' Hong Kong cinema from the more plebian, entertainment-oriented films of Chan and the *kyonshi* boom, Japanese film critics and festival planners attempted to tap into the cinephilic sensibilities of a more mature, and culturally self-conscious audience of moviegoers in the recreation of Hong Kong cinema as 'fashionable'. Small-scale film distributor Prénom H, helmed by president Hiroko Shinohara, was particularly critical in this project, mobilizing material and semiotic resources alike in the reframing of Hong Kong cinema and stars as particularly attuned to a cosmopolitan female audience. This project, I argue, was part of a larger discourse of East Asia-centered female internationalism, through which spectatorship of Hong Kong cinema became one means through which women were understood to be on the cutting edge of Japan's new Asian orientation. This politically approbated mode of fandom proved, for fans, to be one means by which they were able to avoid criticisms of women's media and star consumption that historically have plagued fans in Japan.

Yet, as I mention at the beginning of this chapter, this opening scene in fact constitutes a reasonably accurate, practical representation of the ways in which Hong Kong star fandom was experienced by Japanese female fans in the main. While characterized in the popular press as a fandom primarily of young, single, urban, professional women whose interest in Hong Kong films and stars was centered on the cosmopolitan films of such filmmakers as Wong, Peter Chan, and Fruit Chan, this

fandom surpassed such characterizations in its broad geographical and demographic composition, as well as in its breadth of interest in Hong Kong films and stars. In what follows, I will examine the material means by which Japanese female fans consumed Hong Kong cinema, both within and outside mainstream distribution channels. In so doing, I will foreground the ways in which the lived experience of Hong Kong star fandom exceeded its narrow conception by the Japanese mass media and marketers of Hong Kong cinema in Japan.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BETWEEN CULT AND THE TRANSCULTURAL:

#### HONG KONG STAR FANDOM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

In sheer numbers, Jackie Chan is surely the most recognized movie star on the planet. ...Japanese girls, for some reason, are among his most obsessively loyal fans, and, largely for fear of upsetting them, he keeps quiet about his many romantic involvements....When it was falsely reported that Chan planned to remarry, one Japanese girl swallowed poison in front of his office building, and was narrowly rescued; another jumped in front of a train, and was killed. “This makes me a lot of trouble,” Chan said, adding that other female fans have stalked him. “Some of these girl [sic], they scare the shit out of you.”

Fredric Dannen & Barry Long, *Hong Kong Babylon*

### Introduction

When Jackie Chan was making his final, successful bid for Hollywood stardom in the latter half of the 1990s, the story of his ‘obsessive’ Japanese female fandom was a staple of interviews and profiles published online and in the American press. An ever-evolving tale advanced by Chan himself in his 1998 autobiography, *I am Jackie Chan*, its characterization of Japanese women as a barely contained mob of emotionally unstable hysterics had the effect of establishing the enormity of his pan-Asian superstardom to a mainstream Western audience heretofore unfamiliar with his extensive oeuvre. More importantly, it also served to flatter a Western cult fandom of kung-fu cinema that constituted itself in part through the structuring absence of overtly affective investment in Hong Kong stars. In singling out for critique Japanese women who got too close to him – both emotionally and physically – Chan, who

trades on his physicality, legitimated a 'proper' interest in his body by appealing to male fans' appreciation of the "corporeal authenticity"<sup>1</sup> of his embodied stardom.

Cult fandom historically has constituted women as the mainstream 'other' against which fan identities are constituted.<sup>2</sup> Based on a system of cultural capital that privileges 'authentic' opposition to social institutions, consumer capitalism, and cultural homogeneity,<sup>3</sup> cult distances the female spectator as much through material practice as textual content. Women's often-necessary implication in the social organization of time and space results in the construction of a feminine-coded 'mainstream' against which cult, emerging from what Joanne Hollows has termed the spatiotemporal "twilight zones"<sup>4</sup> of midnight movies and sleazy theaters, derives its oppositionality. Thus, if, as Mark Jancovich (by way of Sarah Thornton) suggests, cult fandom positions itself "outside media and culture' as 'grassroots cultures (which) resist and struggle with a colonizing mass-mediated corporate world,'"<sup>5</sup> women are precluded from participating in it by virtue of their social susceptibility to that same colonizing culture.

In the United States, where cult historically has been the primary mode of Hong Kong film reception,<sup>6</sup> such tales of unhinged Japanese fans at once confirmed Chan's status as a global superstar and implicitly affirmed the cult sensibility of his American audience. In Japan, where such stories went untold, women's association with commercial, mainstream media nonetheless colored the perception of Chan's

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt, "Kung-fu Cult Masters," 159.

<sup>2</sup> Hollows, "The Masculinity of Cult," 36-37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>5</sup> Jancovich, "Cult Fictions," 315.

<sup>6</sup> See Jeffrey Sconce (1995), "Trashing the Academy"; David Bordwell (2000), *Planet Hong*; David Desser (2000), "The Kung Fu Craze"; Gina Marchetti (2001), "Jackie Chan and the Black Connection."

female fans by male martial arts aficionados. In the 1999 book *Ajian mūbī jankīzu!!* (Asian movie junkies!!), four men take up the issue of Chan's mid-1980s transformation and, in particular, the book *Okurimono*, implicitly conveying their own oppositional tastes through their critique of the star's marketing to a mainstream, mostly female audience:

Ginty: In Jackie's case, fans' perception of him went from Jackie as an action star to "All About Jackie Chan" [*Okurimono*] where he was promoted as an idol. And since I just wanted information [about him], I wound up buying that book.

Yashiro: And then, it had pointless pictures of Jackie blowing out candles on a birthday cake and stuff.

Ginty: Even though he wasn't supposed to have a girlfriend, it was stuffed with information like how he had a double bed. And then in the latter half of the book, he had an advice column (laugh). That was the point at which everyone distanced themselves [from Chan].

Kiuchi: Yeah, that was a difficult period.

Uechi: The charming Jackie of those days was also good. But even though he came to Japan often, I have no recollection of him. After all, he was on TV programs like [Beat Takeshi's] "Super Jockey."

Kiuchi: The "Challenge Jackie" series in the "Ganbareman" sketch was good. Jackie did a lot of appearances on variety shows....And he also did a concert when *Five Lucky Stars* came out. At the Budōkan, with Sammo Hung and Yuen Biao.

Yashiro: It's a side of him that's hard to believe now. They were selling a Tōhō-Tōwa-style image of "everybody's Jackie."

Kiuchi: With people on TV like Auntie Komori<sup>7</sup> saying stuff like "Jackie Chan is cute."<sup>8</sup> (fig. 9)

Female fans, while not overtly identified, are signified in this conversation through references to Chan's pop-idol promotion and the banality of pictures showcasing his 'soft' side. Through the articulation of "Tōhō-Tōwa" marketing tactics and the mainstream audience at whom they were aimed, these fans were able to differentiate between their own 'authentic' cult fandom and that of the feminized masses.

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<sup>7</sup> "Auntie Komori" (Komori no obachama) was the nickname of film critic and TV personality Komori Kazuko (1909-2005).

<sup>8</sup> Kiuchi, et.al., *Ajian mūbī jankīzu*, 42.



**Figure 9:** Raymond Chow, Jackie Chan, and Sibel Hu with Komori Kazuko.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, the dividing line between male cult and female mainstream fans here is blurred by these men themselves in their reluctant admission of participation in, and appreciation of, Chan's popular persona; a blurring that is, in fact, symptomatic of technological changes that transformed audiences' relationships to media in 1980s Japan. As Barbara Klinger has argued, the emergence of technologies that brought media into the home afforded cult fans an intensity of experience that strengthened the divide between detached 'mainstream' and cult spectatorship. VHS and, in particular, DVD technologies allowed for the circulation of comparatively rare media texts outside official distribution channels, the collection of which reinforced an 'authentic' cult identity.<sup>10</sup> Yet, the very technologies that have contributed to the reinforcement of an oppositionality critical to this cult subjectivity equally blur the line between cult and mainstream fans by bringing cult media into the domestic

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<sup>9</sup> *My Lucky Stars* (1985) film pamphlet, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 67.



sphere, thus “threaten[ing] the ‘integrity’ of cult by offering to reveal its insider knowledges to all.”<sup>11</sup>

Does it thus follow that cult becomes an empty category, or does it retain a hermeneutical usefulness? In his discussion of what he terms “postmodern” cult, Timothy Corrigan argues that the conditions of film spectatorship, more than specific film texts themselves, have produced the “cultish formations and viewing activities”<sup>12</sup> associated with cult film. In particular, his observation of audiences’ ‘ownership’ of films – both physical and affective<sup>13</sup> – presages more recent scholarship<sup>13</sup> on the intersection of media technologies and intense fan subjectivities.<sup>14</sup> Here, the technology-enabled collecting of films on portable media is conceived as an exercise that, as Klinger argues, “surpasses and obscures the [collector’s] function as a consumer in the marketplace”<sup>15</sup> through media industrial deployment of “the rhetoric of intimacy...and mastery.”<sup>16</sup> Such appeals to media and technological mastery are, as James Kendrick argues, “a way of reworking the gendered nature of television and its association with everydayness into a masculine domain of control,”<sup>17</sup> and, as such, constitute an effective inoculation against the otherwise feminized (and feminizing) domestic sphere within which cult media are consumed.

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<sup>11</sup> Hollows, “The Masculinity of Cult,” 42.

<sup>12</sup> Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls*, 81.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-4.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Tashiro, “The Contradictions of Video Collecting,” *Film Quarterly* 50.2 (Winter 1996-7) 11-18; James Kendrick (2005), “Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs”; Craig Hight (2005), “Making-of Documentaries on DVD”; Barbara Klinger (2006), *Beyond the Multiplex*; Klinger (2010), “Becoming Cult”; Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates (2010), “On Not Being a Fan.”

<sup>15</sup> Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 88.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>17</sup> Kendrick, “Aspect Ratios and Joe Six-Packs,” 65.

The intimacies of film collecting center on the behind-the-scenes minutiae of DVD extras that at once inundate the viewer with the “secrets”<sup>18</sup> of production and, as Craig Hight writes in the context of *The Lord of the Rings*, “invite us into the closed and artificial world of the production...as if we have been invited into the homes of the cast and crew to view the film with them, listening as they tell stories of their production experience with the sound of the film turned down.”<sup>19</sup> It is in this second sense that we may begin to discern within the practices of cult consumption a space for female fandom, insofar as the kind of affective intimacy born of collecting that Hight describes (in contrast with the paradoxically distanced intimacy of esoteric knowledges of media production) closely parallels women’s fandom of stars.

Particularly within the Japanese context, as William W. Kelly observes, such fans

are not satisfied with the formal performances, with the mediated and staged glimpses of stars. They seek to get behind the curtain, to know more about the performers, to “possess” them through tokens like autographs and handprints and bootleg tapes. Jazz record collectors do not just like listening to jazz; they want ownership, physical possession of the very material objects of jazz performance. They want the visual and tactile intimacies of ownership, beyond – and sometimes quite apart from – the pleasures of hearing the music. Thus, intimacy can inhere in the physicality of a momentary handshake and the materiality of vinyl and the unique tremolo of a voice but also in the more ephemeral and virtual.<sup>20</sup>

Kelly argues that Japanese star “fans are set apart from others in seeking intimacy – and paradoxically, seeking intimacy in highly commodified settings.”<sup>21</sup> Yet, as the abovementioned work on cult fan practices shows, a desire for precisely this kind of

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<sup>18</sup> Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Hight, “Making-of Documentaries on DVD,” 12.

<sup>20</sup> Kelly, “Introduction: Locating the Fan,” 9.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

commodified intimacy is, in fact, a defining characteristic of intense fandom in late capitalism.

In this chapter, I examine the intersection of women's affective interest in Hong Kong stars, new media technologies, and commodified practices of star-centered fandom through a conceptualization of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars in the late 1980s and 1990s as both a transcultural, and a 'trans-cult-ural', audience situated not only between the fan cultures of Hong Kong and Japan, but also between cult and star fan subjectivities. The term 'transcultural' has been invoked with increasing frequency in scholarship of transnational media and fandoms as a means of capturing the dialogical possibilities of affinities of experience that, both literally and figuratively, exceed the parameters of the nation-state.<sup>22</sup> While necessarily maintaining this sense of the term, my use of "transcultural" to describe the female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan is equally intended to foreground the "semiotic solidarity"<sup>23</sup> between cult and star fan modalities that are both produced by their industrial and technological contexts, and themselves contribute to the production of new, hybrid fan subjectivities.<sup>24</sup>

Below, I first examine the affective underpinnings of this fandom, arguing that they can be generalized as emanating from structural and semiotic affinities that facilitated Japanese women's ability to derive meaning from Hong Kong star personae. Second, I look at the contexts of women's uses and consumption of media technologies, in particular highlighting the ways in which the mainstream

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<sup>22</sup> Lau, 3-5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>24</sup> For a discussion of the various iterations of "cult" in the films of Peter Jackson, see Harmony H. Wu (2003), "Trading in Horror, Cult, and Matricide."

proliferation of Hong Kong movies on Video CD (VCD) rendered female fans accidental connoisseurs of a technology that was, in the Japanese context, both masculine and highly niche. I then turn to a discussion of the cultural geographies of Japanese women's fandom of Hong Kong stars; here, I pay particular attention to the ways in which fans' affective drive to buy star-centered media and paraphernalia combined with specific sites of acquisition to contribute to the transformation of female fans from mainstream to marginal cult consumers. Finally, I look at women's cultish consumption of Hong Kong stars within the domestic context, discussing in particular the acts of negotiation, accommodation, and encouragement that both hindered and helped women's performance of transcultural fandom.

### **Return of the Repressed**

In the book *Honkon chūdoku* (Hong Kong addicted), Hara Tomoko notes of Hong Kong star Aaron Kwok, "with his dancing skills and *bishōnen* [beautiful boy] good looks, he has the air of a Johnny's-style idol."<sup>25</sup> Hara's comparison of Kwok with iconic Japanese male idols is, in fact, broadly applicable to male Hong Kong stars of the 1980s and 1990s. Iwabuchi attributes the appeal of these stars to Japanese fans' nostalgic longing for their youth, observing that "mature-aged Japanese women often explain the attraction of Hong Kong idols by referring to the good old days of the Japanese entertainment world which they themselves enjoyed in their teens or early twenties....The adolescent memory of a glittering Japanese entertainment world is

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<sup>25</sup> Hara, *Honkon chūdoku*, 87.

apparently evoked by Hong Kong stars today.”<sup>26</sup> Yet, although fans’ interest in Hong Kong stars frequently was informed by their experiences of Japanese idol fandom, this affinity was neither necessary nor always one of equivalence. As one woman observes, “I’m often asked at work why I’m a fan of Hong Kong idols. I think it might be because they have a glamour and extravagance lacking in Japanese idols. And they’re kinder and friendlier than Japanese idols – although I’ve never actually been to a Japanese singer’s concert or joined a fan club.”<sup>27</sup> Japanese fans of Hong Kong stars read them against a backdrop of Japanese idol culture not in terms of simple substitution, but rather through a complex calculus of recognition and rejection. Whether fans of idols or not, Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars recognized in male Hong Kong entertainers a mode of promotion and presentation that was coherent within their own popular cultural context, as well as star personae that were just different enough to be tantalizing. The Hong Kong star system of the 1980s and 1990s was grounded in star and media industrial practices conceived and refined in Japan, yet, more than mere borrowing and imitation, Hong Kong producers adapted these practices to their own industrial constraints. In so doing, they cultivated stars who ultimately, if unintentionally, returned to Japan embodying both a comfortable familiarity and intriguing difference that both spoke to fan dissatisfaction with the idols of their own popular culture and, at the same time, reinforced its broad cultural and industrial underpinnings.

Allowing for idiosyncratic differences, it is reasonable to say that the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars had its genesis in affinities of industrial and

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<sup>26</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 190-1.

<sup>27</sup> Email correspondence, March 3, 2003.

semiotic practice between the Japanese and Hong Kong popular cultural contexts. In studies of transcultural media, ‘affinity’ typically has been understood in terms of geographical proximities that, as Joseph Straubhaar argues, foster “distinct regional cultural patterns.”<sup>28</sup> In the Japanese popular consciousness, as well, this was the widely accepted meaning of the term ‘*shinkinkan*’ that peppered discourses of transnational cultural flow in the 1990s. Yet, it is in Straubhaar’s own (elided) acknowledgement of the increasingly dispersed flow of transnational media outside of regional zones that the limitations of this perspective are discerned, begging the question of how we might account for such phenomena. One possibility is Matt Hills’s notion of “transcultural homology,”<sup>29</sup> by which he refers to the border-crossing cultural affinities of self-identified Western and Japanese *otaku*. This homology, he argues, “is not imposed by forces of globalization, even if it may relate to forces and tensions of late capitalism.”<sup>30</sup> Rather, Hills suggests that homological structures may interpellate fans across cultures in ways that both operate through and exceed the intentions of media industries. In the context of the Japanese fandom of Hong Kong stars, homological affinities born of transnational industrial practices combined with “analogical structures of feeling”<sup>31</sup> that afforded Japanese fans multiple points of recognition and intimacy.

The ‘Johnny’s’ referenced above are the boy bands of Japanese promoter Johnny Kitagawa, which have been a looming landmark on the Japanese popular music scene

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<sup>28</sup> Straubhaar, “Beyond Media Imperialism,” 55.

<sup>29</sup> Hills, “Transcultural Otaku,” 4.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Shohat and Stam, “From the Imperial Family,” 161.

since the early 1960s, when Kitagawa launched the four-man band, The Johnnies.<sup>32</sup> The success of this group among young girls and women led Kitagawa to establish Johnny's Jimusho, or Johnny & Associates, with the aim of organizing and promoting almost interchangeable male 'idol' groups collectively known as "Johnny's."<sup>33</sup> While most aggressively marketed to a young female audience through publications such as *My Idol* and *Myōjō* (Star), the music and images of the most successful Johnny's idols today are ubiquitous on Japanese television and cinema screens, as well as in the popular press. Johnny's Jimusho has been credited with conceiving the "360-degree model"<sup>34</sup> of idol manufacture through which promotion companies scout, train, and promote both solo and group acts, carefully orchestrating public appearances and retaining key distribution rights to their work.<sup>35</sup> Given the high degree of control and predictability built into Kitagawa's profitable "Pretty Man Factory" (*Bidanshi Fakutori*),<sup>36</sup> it became a model for other entertainment industries in industrialized East Asia, notably Hong Kong and Taiwan.<sup>37</sup> In the case of Hong Kong, as Hiroshi Aoyagi explains, the Japanese model of "idol pop" incorporated "long-term planning...into their promotional system, enabling the successful performers to develop their careers as they matured from novices to experienced actors."<sup>38</sup> These performers worked their way from television studio training programs and singing competitions such as the Asia Song Contest to prominence in the music, television,

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<sup>32</sup> Schilling, *The Encyclopedia of Japanese Pop Culture*, 232.

<sup>33</sup> An offshoot, Johnny's Jr., serves as a training ground for younger performers.

<sup>34</sup> McClure, "Surround Sound," 20.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 113; Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, 246-8.

<sup>38</sup> Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, 247.

and film industries; in this, they mirrored the “multi-talents”<sup>39</sup> of the Japanese idol industry.

Characteristic of the performances of emerging Hong Kong entertainers were their many Cantonese covers of Japanese pop songs. In Hong Kong, early exposure to Japanese pop music came in the form of the opening and closing theme songs of Japanese TV shows, which in the 1970s and 1980s were broadcast in the original Japanese whether the program itself was dubbed into Cantonese (on Cantonese-language channels ATV and TVB-Jade), or broadcast entirely with original Japanese soundtrack (on the Sunday “Japanese Hour” programming of predominantly English-language TVB-Pearl). This coincided with Hong Kong producers’ efforts to forge a viable local television industry through the production of both media and talent, which resulted in the popularity of Cantonese-language theme songs that helped secure the position of a new, vernacular popular music.<sup>40</sup> Given the need for a near-constant stream of new hits to keep fledgling performers visible, producers turned to Cantonese covers of Japanese songs.

Among the earliest successful Japanese covers by a rising Hong Kong star was Leslie Cheung’s version of the Kikkawa Kōji song “Monica,” which became one of his signature hits. So-called Canto-pop ‘Heavenly Kings’ Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, and Aaron Kwok also performed numerous covers of Japanese songs, with Kwok becoming strongly associated with several Johnny’s idols including the boy-band Shōnentai and singers Go Hiromi and Tahara Toshihiko. Christine Yano has argued, in the context of

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<sup>39</sup> Darling-Wolf, “Virtually Multicultural,” 511. Darling-Wolf defines “multi-talents” as those performers who work across at least two, and often three, media: television, music, and film.

<sup>40</sup> Ogawa, “Japanese Popular Music in Hong Kong,” 145.



Japanese *enka* (popular folksong) performers, that cover performances are, in and of themselves, “not neutral, but highly charged acts by virtue of the intimacies they perform.”<sup>41</sup> For transcultural fans, Cantonese covers and the shared fandom of Japanese idols signified a cultural commonality that intensified fans’ feelings of intimacy with Hong Kong stars. As Miyazaki Akemi of the “woman-made” film *dōjinshi Cinema Journal* writes of Leslie Cheung’s 1997 concert tour, “He sang songs such as Kikkawa Kōji’s ‘MONICA’ and Yamaguchi Momoe’s ‘Sayonara no mukōgawa’ [The other side of goodbye] that are familiar to Japanese people, and which were probably well-received even by those who had never heard [him sing] before.”<sup>42</sup> Yet another fan writes of this concert, “I had no idea what he was saying in the interludes between songs. I only understood when he said [in English], ‘My idol is Momoe Yamaguchi,’” and [I thought] ‘Leslie is a Momoe fan, too,’ feeling a wonderful intimacy (because I’m a fan, too).”<sup>43</sup>

Not only business model and content, but the Johnny’s male aesthetic was adapted for use within the Hong Kong entertainment industry as well. Typical PR poses of 1980s and 1990s idols emphasized certain ‘types’ that repeated throughout the Johnny’s universe: cute, goofy, serious, sexy, sporty, and ‘beautiful’. In Hong Kong, given the industry’s emphasis on solo entertainers rather than groups, these types were merged in a more generalized “soft masculinity”<sup>44</sup> articulated through the use of

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<sup>41</sup> Yano, “Covering Disclosures,” 201.

<sup>42</sup> Miyazaki Akemi, “Zhang Guo-rong Riben yanchanghui (Leslie Cheung Japan concert),” *Cinema Journal* 40 (January 25-26, 1997): 60.

<sup>43</sup> N.A., “Letter to Hong Kong” Vol. 19, 12. Cheung’s real-life appreciation of 1970s Japanese idol Yamaguchi Momoe became the impetus of a running joke in the 1995 Tsui Hark film *The Chinese Feast*, in which his character announces plans to emigrate to Canada to be with his “girlfriend,” Yamaguchi, itself a reference to Cheung’s own short-lived Canadian emigration in the early 1990s.

<sup>44</sup> Jung, *Korean Masculinities*, 30.

soft focus, plush toys, puppies, flowers, and wool sweaters and scarves. For some fans, this image came to characterize Hong Kong masculinity in the main; as one Tokyo woman in her mid-thirties writes, “Hong Kong boys are really nice and cute. For those of you who like [Johnny’s idols] Kinki Kids or V6-types, you should definitely go [to Hong Kong]. The streets are full of them.”<sup>45</sup>

Such structural affinities between the Japanese and Hong Kong idol industries were not the impetus for Japanese women’s ‘discovery’ of Hong Kong stars. Rather, they served to foreground the constituent differences of Hong Kong idol culture relative to that of Japan. In Japan, idol careers typically are short in duration and generally limited to the production of recorded songs, live concerts, and television, with the rare feature film appearance.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, the singing careers of Hong Kong stars of the 1980s and 1990s were nearly indistinguishable from their television and – in particular – feature film acting careers, the two working in concert to keep a star’s image firmly in the public eye. As described by Chihata Mineko, “Although it seems far removed from the field of film, one of the things that Hong Kong actors are most famous for is that the majority of them moonlight as singers, and they sing the theme songs of even those movies they star in.”<sup>47</sup> In Hong Kong, as Masashi Ogawa observes, stars’ pervasiveness was born of necessity:

As the population of Hong Kong is small, it follows that the consumer market of Hong Kong is small as well. Despite the potential of a vast market in globally dispersed Chinese communities, the global success of a song or singer

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<sup>45</sup> O.T., “Letter to Hong Kong” Vol. 12, *Hong Kong Stars News*, August 1, 1996, 10.

<sup>46</sup> There are, of course, exceptions to this rule: former idols such as Matsuda Seiko and Motoki Masahiro, as well as members of the popular – and omni-present – Johnny’s group SMAP, have remained fixtures on the Japanese popular culture scene long past the peak of their idol trajectories.

<sup>47</sup> Chihata Mineko, “Kono kabā kyoku no moto uta wa nani? (What is the origin of this cover song?),” *Cinema Journal* 31 (December 1994): 54.

is dependent on success first being obtained in Hong Kong. And in order for pop music to be successful in Hong Kong, it is necessary to constantly produce smash hits in a short cycle. It is often said that ‘one hit in three songs is not enough in Hong Kong. There must be hits every three months!’<sup>48</sup>

In the same way, Hong Kong’s equally small television and film markets required stars’ near-saturation of screens. For an actor such as Chow Yun-fat, this translated into performances in 20 television series and 21 feature films in the 9-year period between 1976 and 1985.<sup>49</sup> By comparison, during the same period Leslie Cheung appeared in 17 television series, 16 theatrical films, released 5 albums,<sup>50</sup> and made numerous public appearances culminating in a ten-show concert tour in 1985.<sup>51</sup>

Additionally, as Ogawa notes, Hong Kong performers historically have made themselves available to journalists as part of their ongoing work to retain visibility within the intensely competitive Hong Kong entertainment market.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, with one of the highest population densities in the world, Hong Kong’s geography makes it all but impossible for stars to distance themselves physically from the milieu of everyday life. Thus, Hong Kong stars and their promoters instead capitalize on their locality, emphasizing commonalities between their formative experiences and those of their fans. In the case of martial arts stars Jackie Chan, Sammo Hung, and Yuen Biao, the severity of their childhood theatrical training became the subject of a 1988 biopic entitled *Painted Faces*, in which Hung himself portrayed their *si-fu* (master), Yu Jim-yuen. In a telling sequence near the film’s end, diminished demand in Hong Kong for

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<sup>48</sup> Ogawa, “Japanese Popular Music in Hong Kong,” 150.

<sup>49</sup> Iwaida and Tokugi (1991), *Chō Yunfā*.

<sup>50</sup> Henshū Sentā (1999), *Resurī: Resurī Chan no subete*.

<sup>51</sup> Leslie Cheung Internet Fan Club,

<http://www.lesliecheung.com/index.asp?Section=/music/concert.index&Charset=big5> (accessed October 23, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Ogawa, “Japanese Popular Music in Hong Kong,” 153.

Beijing Opera performers compels the pupils to seek work as film extras. During the filming of a firing squad sequence, other extras cease acting once the tracking camera has passed them by; in contrast, Hung, Chan, and Yuen continue writhing in imaginary pain until the director shouts “Cut!” In response to the laughter and puzzled looks of their fellow extras, they explain, “This is the ethical code of an actor.” This dedicated work ethic is woven into the contemporary personae of the three stars in an epilogue which reads, “His pupils struggled for years in the film business. After years of sweat, they fulfilled their childhood dream to become stunt[men] for many a big star. Today, beyond their wildest dream [sic], they have themselves become superstars whose stunt work no one can surpass.” *Painted Faces* thus mobilizes hardships common to a contemporaneous, locally-born Hong Kong audience in the heightening of their identification and intimacy with its star-protagonists. Similarly, Chow Yun-fat’s humble origins in a small farming community on outlying Lamma Island, as well as the Kowloon birthplace of Andy Lau, are equally part of their star personae in Hong Kong, often deployed in their early films as a means of establishing their authenticity and belonging within the Hong Kong milieu.

The emphasis in Hong Kong on stars’ local origins and backstories had parallels in the value placed on Japanese stars’ relative ordinariness, or “tōshindai,”<sup>53</sup> by fans within their own popular cultural context. Life-sized star personae contributed to the “larger effort to create intimacy between celebrities and their audience,”<sup>54</sup> configuring the fan-star relationship as one of mutual support and

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<sup>53</sup> Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, 67.

<sup>54</sup> Darling-Wolf, “SMAP, Sex, and Masculinity,” 359.

service.<sup>55</sup> This mirrors the multivalenced ordinariness of Western star fandom,<sup>56</sup> in which extraordinariness commingles with commonness in the star persona, with one critical difference: the size and scope of both the Japanese and Hong Kong entertainment industries, relative to that of Hollywood, has resulted in a particular value being placed by fans on physical proximity with stars. Yano observes that, in the context of Japanese *enka*,

Stars enable and encourage this bodily engagement by regularly, if formulaically, reaching out to fans. These activities include leaving the stage while singing and mingling with the audience, not as a spontaneous gesture, but one preplanned and orchestrated to systematically cover first one side of the auditorium, then the other, aisle by aisle, back to front....They also include more formal handshaking sessions....[and] photo sessions at annual fan club dinner parties.<sup>57</sup>

Within Japan, such ritualistic performances of intimacy predated the modern era, dating back to as early as 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the urban fan clubs of popular kabuki performers.<sup>58</sup> In the contemporary context of Johnny's and other pop music idols, as Aoyagi writes,

Activities that build and maintain 'intimacy'...are carried out to a degree and with a uniformity that has no apparent equivalent in the American pop star scene. Japanese idol duties include handshaking ceremonies (*akushu kai*) that accompany stage performances....When idols release CDs and promotional videos or publish photo albums or essays, autograph ceremonies (*sign kai*) are held for buyers at retail outlets.<sup>59</sup>

In Hong Kong, where stars' daily schedules are published in the newspaper and public star sightings are not uncommon, the performance of intimacy is comparatively informal. Within the Japanese context, this informality and Hong Kong stars'

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<sup>55</sup> Yano, "Letters from the Heart," 48.

<sup>56</sup> Dyer, *Stars*, 43; Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 231.

<sup>57</sup> Yano, "Letters from the Heart," 45-6.

<sup>58</sup> Matsudaira, "*Hiiki Renchū* (Theater Fan Clubs)," 114-121.

<sup>59</sup> Aoyagi, *Islands of Eight Million Smiles*, 70.

apparent spontaneity contrasted favorably with the formulaic fan service of Japanese stars. As one fan of Eric Suen observed of his appearance at the 1996 Asian Music Festival held in Fukuoka,

The intro to *Xi guan* [Habit] began. We had planned to call out [his name] at this point, but our timing was off and it failed. Still, we each called out “Eric.” He grinned and waved his hand slightly at us, down by his waist. Just that was enough to send us to heaven. Over and over he waved a bit at us in response to calling his name. A Japanese singer would never wave for us. It seems to me that Eric really cherishes his fans.<sup>60</sup>

Shimamura Mari, in the 1998 book *Mōsō tengoku* (Fantasy paradise), describes Hong Kong stars as generally possessing this kind of attentiveness to fans, noting that “they present fans with handshaking time, they throw their towels out to the crowd with a kiss. And the sight of fans directly presenting bouquets and stuffed animals [to stars] is rare in Japan. I hear that this degree [of fan service] is natural [in Hong Kong] and that at local concerts stars even go around welcoming people in the audience.”<sup>61</sup> Such observations hint at what Japanese fans perceived as the ‘intimacy’ (*shitashimi*) of Hong Kong stars which, within their own popular cultural context, arguably was the most highly valued quality a star could possess.

In certain cases, this intimacy was the direct result of star promotional and marketing strategies designed to capitalize upon a growing audience of Japanese women. Hong Kong stars made themselves available to Japanese fans at special events in both Hong Kong and Japan from as early as 1984, when Jackie Chan participated in a Japanese “Christmas Tour” to Hong Kong, said to have had over 600 applicants.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Japanese fan clubs were granted access to Hong Kong stars ranging from

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<sup>60</sup> M.I., *Our Dearest Eric*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Shimamura, *Mōsō tengoku*, 50.

<sup>62</sup> Sasaya, “Omowazu,” 75.

Leon Lai to the lesser-known Chin Kar-lok (fig. 10). Beginning in 1990, the Prénom H-sponsored Yumcha Club organized tours to Hong Kong for the purpose of meeting such A-list stars as Sally Yip, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Sammo Hung, Chow Yun-fat, Anita Mui, Stephen Chow, Andy Lau, and Leslie Cheung, as well as filmmakers



**Figure 10:** Chin Kar-lok doing karaoke with from Japan, in Japanese summer kimono.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 11:** Leslie Cheung in with fans in Tokyo with Yumcha Club members.<sup>63</sup>

John Woo, Ann Hui, Shu Kei, and Peter Chan (fig. 11).<sup>65</sup> From the perspective of star promotion, such accessibility, like the patterned handshaking sessions of Japanese singers, was calculated to strengthen a star's fan base in Japan. For fans, such attentions on the part of Hong Kong stars were a stark contrast to the formalized inattention of Japanese entertainers. Carolyn Stevens notes that, in Japan, "fandom...is a 'labor of love', a service performed without expectation of retribution,"<sup>66</sup> in which "the artist does not acknowledge the fans' deep feelings for him personally."<sup>67</sup> In this sense, Hong Kong stars' acknowledgement of Japanese fan interest and 'support'

<sup>63</sup> Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express*, 242.

<sup>64</sup> Hoshino Kei, *This is Chin Kar-lok Magazine* (August 6, 1999), 25.

<sup>65</sup> Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express* (1998).

<sup>66</sup> Stevens, "Buying Intimacy," 72.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

strengthened a sense of transcultural intimacy predicated not on cultural affinities in the broad sense, but popular cultural homologues that at once resonated with Japanese fans and fulfilled their star-centered desires to a greater degree than the icons of their own popular cultural context.

Yet, while this helps to account for fans' affective interest in Hong Kong stars, it does not speak to the ways in which Japanese women both 'discovered' these stars and cultivated an intense fandom centered on them. Below, I trace an alternative history of Hong Kong star fandom in Japan to that found in the Japanese mass media, examining the ways in which transformations in technologies of media delivery, as well as the sites of star-centered consumption, engendered not only the fandom itself, but a specifically 'trans-cult-ural' fan subjectivity among Japanese women.

### **Towards a 'Trans-cult-ural' Fan Subjectivity**

Mori Kei's<sup>68</sup> 2001 self-published fan memoir, *Machigatte itara gomen nasai* (Forgive me if I'm wrong), begins with a protracted tease narrating her discovery of, and gradual attraction to, Hong Kong film and music star Leslie Cheung. Throughout the course of "seven or eight years"<sup>69</sup> during the 1990s, his name and image catch her largely indifferent eye through film reviews in the magazine she edits, gossip columns in the sports dailies through which she follows horse races, and snippets of Chinese language TV programming that she watches while waiting for Serie A soccer matches to begin on cable TV. Yet, it is not until her relocation from Tokyo's Setagaya Ward to Mitaka, a suburb devoid of cultural distractions such as cinemas, that she truly

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<sup>68</sup> "Mori Kei" is the penname of self-describe Hong Kong star fan Fukunaga Yoshiko.

<sup>69</sup> Mori, *Machigatte itara*, 13.



engages with Cheung's persona. On the recommendation of a friend, she rents Wong Kar-wai's *Days of Being Wild* (1993) at a neighborhood video rental shop; Cheung's wounded portrayal of the narcissistic Yuddy piques her interest to the extent that she begins first to see him everywhere – notably in a garish display advertising his latest CD at a local music shop – and then to seek him out at Chinese entertainment specialty shops. Her sister, a fan of Japanese-Taiwanese star Takeshi Kaneshiro, disabuses her of the preconception that she will have to venture as far as Yokohama's Chinatown – a trip of at least two hours – in order to find Cheung-related media and paraphernalia. Instead, she directs Mori to Jasmine Tea, a small specialty shop located within nearby Nakano Broadway mall.<sup>70</sup>

The actual process of star discovery described here by Mori is, in itself, unremarkable. Rather, what is noteworthy about her account of near-misses on an inexorable path leading to Leslie Cheung is its circuitous trajectory through both media and degrees of engagement. Her journey from print media to cable television to video to music CD reflects the mainstream circulation of Hong Kong stars in 1980s and, in particular, 1990s Japan; equally, this initial engagement with Cheung, which she describes as “the beginning of it all (1),”<sup>71</sup> echoes that fragmented and distracted mode of reception described in scholarly research of both Anglo-American<sup>72</sup> and Japanese<sup>73</sup> women television viewers. Glimpses of Cheung within her everyday media environment pique her interest, but none sufficiently to spur her to fandom. In

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<sup>70</sup> Mitaka and Nakano stations are both on Tokyo's Chuo Line, a ride of approximately 10 minutes.

<sup>71</sup> Mori, *Machigatte itara*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> For example, John Ellis (1983), *Visible Fictions*; Tania Modleski (2008 [1982]), *Loving With a Vengeance*; Patrice Petro (1986), “Mass Culture and the Feminine”; Deborah D. Rogers (1991), “Daze of Our Lives”; Sandy Flitterman-Lewis (1992), “All's Well that Doesn't End.”

<sup>73</sup> Midori Fukunishi Suzuki (1995), “Women and Television.”

contrast, her immersion in Cheung fandom – “the beginning of it all (2)”<sup>74</sup> – starts at the point at which she exhausts official channels of Hong Kong media circulation and turns to alternative sites and modes of media acquisition. The mutually intensifying affect and activity that characterizes Mori’s growing fandom is, in fact, characteristic of Japanese women’s fandom of Hong Kong stars in the late 1980s and 1990s, emerging through a transforming technological landscape that exceeded the strategies of mainstream Japanese distribution of Hong Kong cinema.

In this section, I first discuss the technological environment within which Hong Kong cinema circulated among fans. I argue that the inadvertent interpellation of female fans as connoisseurs of masculinized – in the Japanese context – Video CD (VCD) technology accorded this ‘mainstream’ audience a cultish fan subjectivity; at the same time, these VCDs’ origins and, in particular, Cantonese-language content had the equally transformative effect of ‘reterritorializing’<sup>75</sup> fans’ media consumption. Affinities of language and popular cultural homologies here combined to foster an “insider”<sup>76</sup> fan subjectivity predicated on transcultural, rather than film industry, knowledges. Following this I examine the cultural geographies of Hong Kong film fandom, with attention to the ways in which “spatial organization [is] central to the organization of social life.”<sup>77</sup> Specifically, I am here interested in the effects of both physical location and organizational hierarchy of video rental and Hong Kong media specialty shops on the emerging female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan.

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<sup>74</sup> Mori, *Machigatte itara*, 17.

<sup>75</sup> Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics*, 242-50.

<sup>76</sup> Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, 68-74.

<sup>77</sup> Jancovich and Faire, *The Place of the Audience*, 16.

## I. “The VCD age has arrived!”

On the back page of the October 1996 issue of *Hong Kong Stars News*, the media and star paraphernalia catalogue of specialty mail-order company Nishimoto Shōji (Nishimoto Trading), an in-house advertisement for the Sony VCP-S50 VCD player declared that, “From now on it is the age of the video CD. With their compactness and clear picture quality, they archive [media] eternally. For those of you who haven’t been able to buy video CDs because you didn’t have a player, let us introduce you to a veery [sic] special [item]. We’re offering a player that will bring the enjoyment of watching movie videos on a CD-sized disc closer to you!”<sup>78</sup> Given that VCDs were an intermediary technology bridging analog and digital video through low-resolution Mpeg-1 encoding, this was something of an overstatement designed to sell players that, if not as expensive as still-evolving DVD hardware, were nevertheless not cheap.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, despite the ubiquity of VCD media in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian markets,<sup>80</sup> their relative obscurity in Japan made VCD players a niche item that could not be justified as a ‘household’ purchase. Yet, in appealing to readers’ desire to both see and own Hong Kong films unavailable in the mainstream Japanese media market, invoked particularly through images of VCD film cover art that punctuated the pages of their monthly catalogs, Nishimoto Shōji presciently capitalized on the intersection of new technology and fans’ affective desire for greater intimacy with favorite stars.

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<sup>78</sup> *Hong Kong Star News* Vol. 14 (October 1, 1996), 12.

<sup>79</sup> As advertised by Nishimoto, a discounted VCD player could be bought for ¥33,000 (US\$275), compared with ¥68,000 (US\$567) for the Pioneer DVL-9 DVD player also retailed by Nishimoto.

<sup>80</sup> Curtin, *Playing to the World’s Biggest Audience*, 80-83.

While the mini-theater exhibition of ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong films brought them into the Japanese public consciousness, it was VCD technology that was responsible for the circulation of Hong Kong films outside mainstream distribution channels in Japan during the 1990s. Yet, the demand for VCDs was itself sparked by women whose appetites for Hong Kong stars were whetted through videos found on the shelves of Japanese rental shops in the late 1980s. In order to understand the ways in which first VHS, and later VCD, became the media through which Japanese women consumed Hong Kong films during this period, we must first look at the circulation of Hong Kong cinema in Japan outside the mini-theater circuit in the late 1980s.

Given the peripheral role of Hong Kong cinema within the mainstream of Japanese popular culture, the rise of a discernable female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan during the 1980s and 1990s appears paradoxical. While viewed as potentially lucrative from the perspective of the Hong Kong film industry of the 1980s, the Japanese film market posed a number of difficulties for Hong Kong producers. Among these were incompatibilities in production and distribution cycles between Hong Kong and Japan;<sup>81</sup> where Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s and 1990s was distinguished by the speed with which films went from concept to screen,<sup>82</sup> both Japanese production and distribution followed “meticulous”<sup>83</sup> and highly structured time-tables that translated to an inevitable lag between a film’s completion and its release in Japan. Moreover, particularly in the case of television broadcasts of Hong Kong feature films, producers had “little say over whether the film [was] used simply to fill

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<sup>81</sup> Yeung, “Understanding the Japanese Market,” 150.

<sup>82</sup> Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, 120.

<sup>83</sup> Yeung, “Understanding the Japanese Market,” 151.

time slots or whether it [was] being run during prime time by its Japanese distributor,”<sup>84</sup> further inhibiting Hong Kong producers’ drive to market to Japanese audiences.

Not only differences of production and distribution, but also difficulties in conceptualizing a Japanese audience for Hong Kong cinema proved to be a significant barrier to Hong Kong penetration of the Japanese film market. While the first flush of Bruce Lee’s posthumous popularity in 1970s Japan indicated a male audience primed for Hong Kong’s substantial martial arts output, only Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and comedian Michael Hui made a substantial impact on Japanese theater and television audiences through the mid-1980s.<sup>85</sup> Of these, only Jet Li could lay claim to the kind of sober kung-fu that characterized Lee’s earlier films. In contrast, Hui and Chan introduced a comedic complexification of the notion of ‘Hong Kong cinema’ as a *de facto* martial arts tradition. In the Japanese context, particularly at the hands of distributors who carefully pitched their mainstream appeal to Japan’s boys’ manga and girls’ pop idol markets, these latter-day Hong Kong films were rendered immature and ‘*dasai*’ (untrendy) to the mass of adult moviegoers.

In 1986, John Woo’s action hit *A Better Tomorrow* became the highest-grossing local film in Hong Kong history, bringing in US\$4,250,000 at the box office. Intending to capitalize on its Hong Kong success, Nihon Herald released the film in Japan during the prime ‘Golden Week’ window<sup>86</sup> to a box-office take of only US\$590,000, lagging far

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>85</sup> Kurata, *Honkon den’ei hyakka*, 130-132.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Golden Week’ refers to four nearly-consecutive holidays spanning the end of April/beginning of May.

behind the 1987 box office returns of other foreign films.<sup>87</sup> In its South Korean release, as Jinsoo An has observed, *A Better Tomorrow* did equally poorly in mainstream theaters which, he notes, were primarily a site of female film-going. The film's subsequent popularity among South Korean men resulted from its re-distribution in 'mini-theaters' that catered primarily to 'teenaged males.'<sup>88</sup> In contrast, in Japan the film was revived not in urban mini-theaters but on home video, the reach of which translated to the wider dissemination of Hong Kong films throughout the country and across genders.

Japan's video rental market peaked at the same time as films such as *A Better Tomorrow* and *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) were finding their way onto video rental shelves. During the 1986-1989 period, when video players achieved a 53% penetration of Japanese households,<sup>89</sup> over 300 Hong Kong films became available for rental on subtitled (or, in some cases, dubbed) VHS.<sup>90</sup> The majority of films released during this period were targeted at an audience of male martial arts and action film fans. Nonetheless, the low cost of obtaining Hong Kong film distribution rights, relative to those of Japanese and Hollywood films,<sup>91</sup> meant that a wide variety of Hong Kong film genres – ranging from martial arts, action, and horror, to drama, romance, and comedy – received distribution, often through small-scale companies.<sup>92</sup> As *dōjinshi*

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<sup>87</sup> Kitagami, "Jugekisen to kajo na bōryoku," 109; Nikaidō, "Jūdan no shuraba," 111; "1987 Yōga sakuhin haikyū shūnyū (1987 Foreign film box office receipts)," *Kinema Junpō* (February 15, 1988): 196.

<sup>88</sup> An, "The Killer," 104-5.

<sup>89</sup> Nakamura, *Nihon bideosofuto shi*, 200.

<sup>90</sup> Ui, *Honkon eiga bideo*. Nakamura (200) notes that, by 1990, 3,237 of 7,090 foreign films on video were *mikōkai* (direct-to-video), surpassing the total number of domestic Japanese titles available on video (2,180) at that time.

<sup>91</sup> Tochigi, "Factors in the Asianization," 13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

(fanzine) editor Itō Takashi retrospectively observed, “in the early period, Hong Kong films in Japan were discovered (*hakken sareta*) in video shops....titles were available in greater numbers in the late 1980s than today – as long as it was new, anything was carried.”<sup>93</sup>

As much as the diversity of titles stocked on video rental shelves, it was the sites of video rental activity that were critical in attracting female viewers to Hong Kong films. Although emerging rental chains such as Tsutaya often carried the widest range of videos, the majority of rental activity (53%) occurred in small shops located near train stations and residential neighborhoods: ‘*papamama*’ (mom and pop) home electronics shops, bookstores, and convenience stores, in particular.<sup>94</sup> Such sites, whether in Tokyo or outlying Oita or rural Tottori, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the grocery stores, dry cleaners, and cafes that women frequented, effectively bringing Hong Kong cinema into the daily patterns of women’s lives. Particularly outside urban areas, the inclusion of Hong Kong films within the rental offerings of a given shop was often random and unpublicized; as such, women’s rental of such films was also frequently happenstance. Self-described fan Shimamura Mari describes this, writing,

Suppose you, who have always hated Hong Kong films without seeing them (or completely disregarded them), reach out for the first time to pick up a film by Wong Kar-wai from the video rental shop....By the time you’ve thought, “[That actor] has a certain coolness that Japanese don’t have,” it’s all over. Even while its appeal is still unclear, you find yourself returning day after day to the ‘Asia Corner’ of the video store.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express*, 24-5.

<sup>94</sup> Nakamura, *Nihon bideosofuto shi*, 173.

<sup>95</sup> Shimamura, *Mōsō tengoku*, 52.

Not only location, but also organization within video rental shops catered to women's star-centric interests. While Japanese video rental shops of the 1980s and 1990s employed the same general organizational structure as their American counterparts, within specific genres (drama, horror, action, etc.) the films of popular performers and filmmakers were often grouped together where critical mass allowed. Between 1988 and 1997, Hong Kong films migrated throughout the organizational hierarchy of Japanese video stores, positioned first within the anonymous mass of genre offerings and gradually coalescing into a coherent 'Asia' category organized by stars. Thus, for example, in the case of Chow Yun-fat, cult action films such as *A Better Tomorrow*, *City on Fire* (1987), and *The Killer* (1989) eventually came to stand alongside other films of Chow's oeuvre, including the drama *Love Unto Waste* (1986), the romance *Dream Lovers* (1986), and the *A Better Tomorrow* parody, *The Romancing Star* (1987).

Such breadth of work was an intrinsic part of the Hong Kong star system of the 1980s and 1990s, designed to capitalize on a relatively limited number of stars in such a way that they appealed to every imaginable demographic. David Bordwell notes of the Hong Kong star system that, "the flexibility available to the star performer typifies the range of creativity available in popular cinema. Far from being straightjackets, genres and a star system can provide a framework – to those prepared to use it."<sup>96</sup> Within the Japanese context, the malleability of star personae characteristic of Hong Kong cinema afforded star-centered Japanese female fans a way of sampling a wider variety of films than in markets where it was defined almost wholly as martial arts and

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<sup>96</sup> Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, 160.



action films. Nonetheless, such sampling was heavily circumscribed by what Japanese video distributors chose to market, ultimately leading fans to alternative avenues of media circulation.

When both official and bootlegged Video CDs (VCDs) supplanted VHS as the preferred method of aftermarket film distribution in Hong Kong, their light weight, standard CD size, and digital formatting made them an ideal format for the transnational circulation of Hong Kong films. VCDs were a technological precursor to DVDs, brought to the market in 1993 by Japan's Sony and Philips corporations.<sup>97</sup> In Japan, they were a technology catering mainly to early adopters; players were commercially available, but primarily in the electronics districts of Tokyo's Akihabara and Osaka's Den-Den Town. As Jakob Nobuoka observes, Akihabara (and Den-Den Town like it) has long been a site heavily coded as masculine through both the preponderance of computing and audio-visual hardware, as well as, in particular, the ubiquity of "sexist and misogynistic [images], many of which amount to forms of pornography,"<sup>98</sup> that comprises its landscape. In this sense, Akihabara and Den-Den Town are akin to those 'twilight zones' of cult consumption from which, as Hollows writes, women are excluded literally by design. Moreover, while commercial VCD software was available in more mainstream outlets, it was content, rather than availability, that discouraged its consumption by women. Anime, racing/car footage, and pornography constituted the vast majority of VCD software production in Japan, its low cost making the format suitable for such niche markets. Thus, in Japan VCDs were an implicitly masculine technology for which women had little need, and which

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<sup>97</sup> Wang, *Framing Piracy*, 50.

<sup>98</sup> Nobuoka, "User Innovation and Creative Consumption," 213.

did not circulate within their usual spheres of media consumption. It was only in the intersection of the widespread transnational circulation of Hong Kong films on VCD and an evolving Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars that Japanese women became transnational consumers of VCD software and domestic consumers of VCD hardware. Through their peripheral consumption of VCDs and their playback devices, female fans themselves entered into a materially and culturally peripheral subjectivity that helped to intensify their intimacy with Hong Kong stars, even as it distanced them from prescriptive Japanese discourses of women's practices of consumption.

VCDs also contributed to fans' sense of transcultural intimacy with Hong Kong stars in one other critical way. As an inexpensive media targeted at local and diasporic Chinese audiences of Hong Kong cinema, VCDs were subtitled in Chinese and, frequently, English of varying qualities.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, Japanese fans arguably were disadvantaged within the transnational VCD market. Yet, the use of dual subtitles on VCDs in fact prompted fans to draw on their knowledge of Chinese characters, from which written Japanese derives, as well as limited English reading ability to decipher on-screen action and dialogue. Such reading strategies served to 'naturalize' spoken Cantonese for fans; as Hosoda Seiko writes in her fan memoir, *Yume miru Honkon* (Hong Kong dreamland), "These days, because I watch too many Hong Kong films and listen to too many Cantonese tapes...even Japanese has wound up sounding like Cantonese. It's even occurred to me that Japanese sounds a bit like Cantonese. Not so much in the pronunciation, but maybe in the intonation? Somehow, when I hear

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<sup>99</sup> The majority of Chinese-language subtitles on Hong Kong VCDs are Mandarin, although rarely films are subtitled in written Cantonese.

them, I've started to be unable to tell the difference."<sup>100</sup> The slippage between written Japanese and Chinese, coupled with fans' reliance on foreign-language, rather than intermediating Japanese, subtitles, encouraged fans' use of Chinese film and popular cultural terminology. Among these was the Chinese written word for "movie," *dianying* (電影),<sup>101</sup> pronounced "den'ei" in Japanese and connoting a vague 'Chineseness' analogous to the use of European terminology to convey a certain cinephilic sensibility in the English-language context. Such use of Chinese terminology, in fact, had precedents in a vast body of Japanese critical writing on Hong Kong and other Chinese cinemas, and its mobilization by fans signified an alternative enculturation within Hong Kong popular culture.

More specific to fans, however, was the use of linguistic overlap between written Chinese and Japanese to 'naturalize' and claim ownership of stars. This was effected both through the adoption of native Cantonese nicknames for certain stars ("Gorgor" [哥哥], or "elder brother," for Leslie Cheung, or "Wahjai" [華仔], or "Little Wah," for Andy Lau Tak-wah, for example), as well as the 'Japanization' of Chinese names (such as "Gakuyū" for Jacky Cheung Hok-yau [張學友], or "Koharu" for Jordan Chan Siu-chun [陳小春], both of which derive from the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters comprising their given names).<sup>102</sup> In his work on language

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<sup>100</sup> Hosoda, *Yume miru Honkon*, 42-3.

<sup>101</sup> *Dianying* (電影) literally means "electric shadow," in contrast with the Japanese term for movie, *eiga* (映画), meaning "projected picture." As in the West, the early Japanese term for films was *dōga* (動画), or "moving picture."

<sup>102</sup> Notably, there is an internal logic at work here that contributes to the determination of whether a nickname remains 'Sinified' or becomes 'Japanified'; namely, where Chinese characters exist in Japanese – 學, 友, 小, 春 – they tend to be uttered with Japanese pronunciation. Where character combinations include one or more characters that are not commonly used in Japanese (i.e., not included in the 2,136 *jōyō* [everyday use] *kanji*) – 哥, 仔 – the Chinese pronunciation is privileged.

performativity in transcultural hip-hop cultures, Alastair Pennycook argues for the consideration of “the ways by which transgressive meaning-making (writing on the walls of the city, mixing languages, sampling sound texts, walking the walk, wearing the clothes) may be seen not so much as adding meaning-making practices to a pre-existing language but rather as a performative making of meaning across many sites.”<sup>103</sup> In the context of the female fandom of Hong Kong stars, this perspective allows us to understand fans’ uses of Chinese terminology not as linguistic appropriation or mis-use, but as a transculturally-inflected mode of fanspeak that itself produces fans’ own ‘trans-cult-ural’ subjectivities.

## II. ‘Trans-cult-ural’ Geographies

While VCD and music CD acquisition was key to circulation of the Hong Kong star *oeuvre* among Japanese female fans, the act of buying them was easier said than done. As one Sapporo-based fan asked in a letter to the editors of the *Honkon den’ei jō* (Hong Kong movie castle) series of books,

Where does everyone see movies that haven’t been released in Japan? In Hong Kong? I’m sure that there are cheap tours there from Tokyo, but... There’s no Chinatown in Sapporo. And, of course, there are no video shops aimed at Chinese people here in Sapporo. You can hardly find CDs, and [in order to find] movies I have many member’s cards [to video rental shops]!! Depending on the store, they sometimes organize by actors, and [once] when I saw “Andy” I cried out, “*Ho ye!*”<sup>104</sup> But it was “Garcia.”<sup>105</sup>

Particularly for fans outside of Japan’s urban centers, obtaining Hong Kong media required the expansion of fans’ geographical repertoires to encompass not only local and area resources, but also distant cities and even Hong Kong itself. In this way,

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<sup>103</sup> Pennycook, *Global Englishes*, E-book.

<sup>104</sup> “*Ho ye*” is a Cantonese colloquialism meaning “great.”

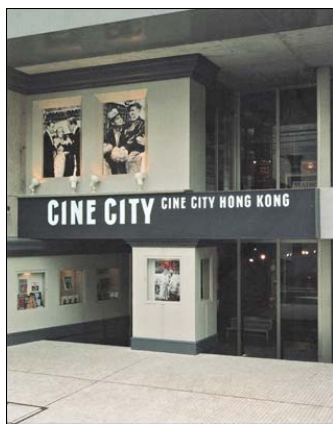
<sup>105</sup> Tōmon, et. al., *Honkon den’ei jō* 3, 223.

alternative sites of Hong Kong media procurement also were critical in producing a 'trans-cult-ural' fan subjectivity that drew as much from affective pleasures of discovery and ownership as from the transnational locus of such activity.

By the mid-1990s urban fans had access to a growing number of specialty shops that targeted the growing fandom of Hong Kong cinema and, in particular, stars. In Tokyo, the latter were represented not only by Prénom H's Cine City Hong Kong, but also by such shops as the abovementioned Jasmine Tea, which primarily sold music CDs and music video DVDs, and Cactus Club, an apartment-cum-shop that sold imported star goods, fan-produced *dōjinshi*, and magazines from both Hong Kong and Japan that focused on Hong Kong (and other East Asian) stars. Additionally, intrepid fans made use of the resources of shops tailored to an expatriate Chinese population such as Chūbun Shoten (Chinese Bookstore). Osaka's China Center, Hong Kong King in Kobe, and Nishimoto Shōji in Fukuoka contributed to the wider accessibility of Hong Kong media outside the Tokyo metropolitan area. Such specialty shops supplemented the unevenly available Hong Kong film offerings of neighborhood video rental outlets through sales of officially licensed VCDs (and, to a lesser extent, Taiwanese VHS, both official and bootleg). At the same time, they responded to fans' demands for other star-centered media and goods: not only music CDs, but also Chinese-language entertainment tabloids, promotional posters, star figurines and 'bromide' (celebrity photographs), as well as offering outlets for the sale of *dōjinshi*. Through the increased availability of such products, fans' relationship to Hong Kong stars shifted from simple spectatorship to active consumption, which had the effect of

intensifying fans' sense of ownership of, and intimacy with, them even as this was mediated by small-scale Japanese marketers of Hong Kong products.

Independent distributor Prénom H was among the earliest retailers of Hong Kong film-related media and goods in Japan, opening a small shop called Honkon Den'ei Fune (Hong Kong Film Ship) in 1991 that sold Hong Kong videos and CDs, as well as star paraphernalia.<sup>106</sup> In 1994, this establishment was relocated to a larger space and reopened as Cine City and Cine City Hong Kong. Situated just off of Aoyama Boulevard in the exclusive Omotesando residential district, and advertising itself as “Japan’s premier specialty shop”<sup>107</sup> for Hong Kong pop culture-related goods, Cine City Hong Kong (CCHK)’s location and polished interior design, as well as the indie/experimental bent of coterminous Cine City, advanced an urban cinephilic sensibility that was fully in the service of ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong film (figs. 12 & 13). Given its affiliation with Prénom H, CCHK necessarily hewed closely to products that



**Figure 12:** Cine City/Cine City Hong Kong exterior<sup>108</sup>



**Figure 13:** Interior of Cine City Hong Kong shortly after its 1994 opening, on Fuji TV’s “AsiaNbeat” show.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 59-60.

<sup>107</sup> Cine City Hong Kong advertisement, 1997.

<sup>108</sup> Cine City Hong Kong advertisement, 1997.

were officially licensed in Japan; not only its in-house line of Prénom H films, books, postcards, and posters, but also professionally subtitled film videos and laser discs distributed by competitor Japanese companies, Japanese-language books about Hong Kong cinema and stars, and magazines such as *PopAsia*<sup>110</sup> and *Asian Pops Magazine*.<sup>111</sup> CCHK was also, in its earliest incarnation, the sole Japanese outlet for commemorative programs of the Hong Kong International Film Festival.<sup>112</sup> Both the HKIFF and its substantial printed programs have been described by Hector Rodriguez as one facet of a “reflectionist framework”<sup>113</sup> within which Hong Kong “critics as cultural connoisseurs [on] a pedagogic mission”<sup>114</sup> sought “to establish the artistic values of Chinese directors by erecting a corpus of canonical filmmakers and film texts that in their view demanded or deserved authorial interpretation.”<sup>115</sup> In making these texts available to Japanese connoisseurs of Hong Kong cinema, Prénom H both reflected a local, and contributed to a transnational, discourse of Hong Kong art cinema that was a potent counterpoint to the attractions of its commercial film industry (an assertion of difference which belied the mainstream underpinnings of all but the most experimental Hong Kong cinema of the period).

At the same time, Cine City Hong Kong evinced a fan orientation in its limited selection of imported CDs and VCDs, Chinese-language magazines, and, in particular,

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<sup>109</sup> Inuwanwan123456, “Katsute no seichi Shineshitei Honkon,” YouTube, June 24, 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j3CGDa7rKgs> (accessed February 16, 2011).

<sup>110</sup> *PopAsia* was produced by Blues Interactions, Inc., a key promoter and producers of American ‘black’ music in Japan. See Ian Condry, *Hip-hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> Cine City Hong Kong product sheet, June 1996.

<sup>112</sup> *AjiaNbito* (Asian Beat), Fuji Television.

<sup>113</sup> Rodriguez, “The Emergence of the Hong Kong New Wave,” 62.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

fan-produced *dōjinshi*. As a means of aligning both the shop and the ancillary Yumcha Club with the broader female fandom of Hong Kong stars, Prénom H sponsored an award for fan-producers of Hong Kong popular culture-centered ‘*mini-comi*’ (mini comics). As Shinohara wrote in 1998,

We often call people who enjoy films through the writing of mini comics ‘*otaku*’,<sup>116</sup> but I think it’s different. People who write mini comics do so because they feel like “I want people to see this,” “I want people to know what I thought of this,” or “I want people to know about this wonderful movie.” They are not turning inward; rather, they have the power to turn outward. I call such people ‘*osoto*’. And, of course, I too am an ‘*osoto*’.<sup>117</sup>

As one of the oldest and most publicized specialty shops catering to Hong Kong films and stars in Japan, both CCHK and its smaller Osaka and Fukuoka branches, opened in November 1997, were an integral part of Japanese fans’ introduction to the wider world of Hong Kong star fandom. Yet, as male fans Itō Takashi and Yoshida Masashi wrote of CCHK in the 2002 issue of their widely-circulating *dōjinshi*, *Den’ei fu’un* (The state of cinema), “[It opened] at a time when there were still few people like Hong Kong movie maniacs and such....and, of course, we welcomed its opening, raising a glass of beer in its honor and rushing right over. It’s unfortunate that a distance has come between ‘Cine City Hong Kong’ and its patrons, but at the time there was a strong sense of us all being fans of Hong Kong films.”<sup>118</sup> Ultimately, the combination of its narrow focus and competing businesses, both in Japan and overseas (particularly as online sales gained in popularity in the 2000s) had the effect of diminishing CCHK’s overall appeal within a rapidly diversifying market for Hong Kong films and star goods.

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<sup>116</sup> The word “*otaku*” literally means “your home” in Japanese. Its use in referring to avid fans and collectors signifies the perception that such people tend to stay at home, closed off from the world.

<sup>117</sup> Shinohara, *Shinema tokkan musume*, 67. “*Osoto*” is a play on *otaku*, combining the honorific prefix “*O*” with “*soto*,” meaning “outside.”

<sup>118</sup> Itō and Yoshida, *Den’ei fu’un 2002*, 189-90.



Following the opening of Cine City Hong Kong in 1994, other retailers soon materialized to compete for fan business. Like CCHK, shops such as Tokyo's Jasmine Tea and Cactus Club, as well as China Center in Osaka, conveyed specific fan sensibilities through their location, design, and merchandise, albeit to different effect than CCHK. Jasmine Tea was situated within the labyrinth of the 'otaku paradise' of Nakano Broadway Mall, located about 15 minutes by train from central Tokyo. A subcultural destination for not only Japanese, but also overseas, fans of anime and manga, Broadway contains three floors of shops retailing everything from newly released manga and anime-related collectibles, to cosplay clothing, vintage scripts, and animation cells. The mall opened in 1966 as an "American-style" indoor shopping arcade catering to local residents of Nakano Ward;<sup>119</sup> in 1987, used manga retailer Mandarake established business within the Broadway complex, ultimately expanding both its space and operations to include sales of *dōjinshi*, as well as manga and anime-related goods.<sup>120</sup> Mandarake's presence within Broadway mall attracted similar alternative culture-centered establishments, effectively transforming it into an *otaku* space within which cult consumption was (and remains) the norm.<sup>121</sup> In this sense, Jasmine Tea, with its bright lighting, laminate wood floors, tastefully designed *kanban* (signboard), and (frequently older) female clientele was something of an anomaly within a site that catered more to cutting-edge kids and older male *otaku* (figs. 14 & 15).

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<sup>119</sup> Broadway Shotenkai, *The Broadway Book*, 1-2.

<sup>120</sup> Mandarake website, <http://www.mandarake.co.jp/en/shop/> (accessed February 27, 2011).

Mandarake is now the largest retailer of such goods in Japan, with branches scattered throughout the country and an online presence that caters, in particular, to overseas anime and manga fans.

<sup>121</sup> Especially on its lower floors, this alternative space is fully intertwined with some of the more mainstream establishments that preexist Mandarake's presence in Broadway Mall, making it an intriguing amalgam of old and new.

Nonetheless, the ways in which it organized and displayed Hong Kong CDs and VCDs reflected the same expectation of fans' intimate knowledge as Jasmine Tea's more



**Figure 14:** Jasmine Tea interior.



**Figure 15:** Jasmine Tea *kanban* and hallway display.<sup>122</sup>

cultish neighbors, making use of stars' Chinese-character (as opposed to transliterated) names and capitalizing on limited space by forgoing explanatory signage in favor of stocking merchandise in every available nook and cranny. In so doing, Jasmine Tea interpellated female fans as cult aficionados of Hong Kong media, enfolding them both literally and figuratively within an *otaku* habitus.

Located in a repurposed apartment building on a side street of Tokyo's trendy Shibuya district, Cactus Club similarly evinced an expectation of fans' familiarity with Hong Kong stars born of limited room and an abundance of imported merchandise. Yet, in contrast with Jasmine Tea, Cactus Club was an explicitly female space that resembled nothing so much as the bedroom of an avid collector of star goods. Teetering bookshelves and cheap laminate cubbies – each filled with stacks of Chinese-language

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<sup>122</sup> Tokyo Qool, "Jasmine Tea: Nakano," 1994, [http://www.tokyoq.com/weekly\\_updates/tqoole/jasmine.html](http://www.tokyoq.com/weekly_updates/tqoole/jasmine.html) (accessed February 28, 2011). Photos used with permission.

entertainment tabloids and books about Hong Kong stars – lined the walls of the store, encircling small tables and chairs that overflowed with assorted stars paraphernalia. Where bookcases could not reach, the walls were covered in Hong Kong star and film posters (figs. 16 & 17). As described by one fan, the experience of ‘discovering’ Cactus Club was akin to that of the cult fan chancing upon a rare object:



**Figure 16:** Cactus Club interior.



**Figure 17:** Cactus Club int. from the entrance.<sup>123</sup>

When I first became obsessed with Leslie in '95, I heard about Cactus Club in a book, identifying it by its small signboard down a murky corridor on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of a multi-tenant building. “Is this Chungking Mansions?” [I thought]. It had the air of one of Hong Kong’s dens of vice, and as I opened the door with mounting trepidation, I discovered inside a small room with mountains of Hong Kong star goods – a real treasure chest – that was crammed with 2 or 3 customers inside.<sup>124</sup>

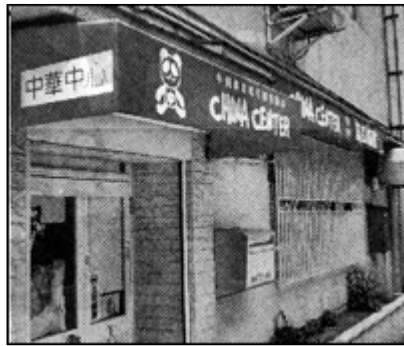
Indeed, much of the appeal of Cactus Club lay in just such acts of discovery. The shop made use of only the broadest of star-centered organizational systems, within which merchandise was to be rummaged through like an attic, the possibility of finding some precious thing always just under the next magazine or rolled up in the next poster.

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<sup>123</sup> *Daijōbu nikki* blog, Dec. 8, 2008. [http://sangyatfaailok.at.webry.info/200812/article\\_3.html](http://sangyatfaailok.at.webry.info/200812/article_3.html) (accessed Feb. 23, 2011). Photos used with permission.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

Osaka's China Center equally capitalized on space, sporting steel shelves teeming with Hong Kong music CDs, VCDs, and Chinese-language books and magazines, and walls plastered in original Hong Kong film and star promotional posters for sale (figs. 19 & 20). Originally located in a converted concrete house on a back street near Osaka's Abenobashi neighborhood, which was undergoing a gradual process of gentrification in the late 1990s, the shop – unlike Jasmine Tea – did not derive any cultish capital from its environs;<sup>125</sup> rather, it conveyed a sense of 'cosy



**Figure 19:** China Center exterior.



**Figure 20:** China Center interior.<sup>126</sup>

cult' through its domestic setting, enhanced by the store requirement that patrons remove their shoes and don house slippers while browsing merchandise. Equally, the daily presence of proprietor Kawamura Norio and his Hong Kong-born wife in the shop, combined with the handmade quality of its marketing, communicated an intimate, female-friendly, fan-centered site for the consumption of Hong Kong media and star goods.

Sarah Chaplin observes that Japanese buildings with a mainstream popular culture orientation generally are aligned with "high' Japanese architecture," that

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<sup>125</sup> China Center subsequently relocated to the nearby Abeno Marche shopping street.

<sup>126</sup> China Center promotional flier, 1996.

features the use of marble, glass, stonewall, and, more recently, cast concrete in the creation of an anti-modernist aesthetic.<sup>127</sup> In contrast, Broadway Mall in Nakano, Cactus Club's Dynast Building, and the converted house within which China Center was located were all, by the 1990s, several decades old, utilitarian in design, and wholly lacking in the light airiness of trendy urban commercial spaces. In this sense, while not quite the 'twilight zones' of cult fandom, these spaces were nonetheless materially peripheral to mainstream sites of consumption, which in turn contributed to the production of a fan subjectivity that was equally peripheral to more mediated modes of star fandom in Japan. Notably, the limited resources of space that characterized these specialty shops mirrored that of Hong Kong's Oriental 188 Shopping Centre and Sino Centre, both of which housed Hong Kong star and Japanese anime/manga-related specialty shops. In this sense, the expectation of fan's recognition of Chinese names and media titles resulting from, among other things, the lack of space for clear organization and explanatory signage in Japanese stores, translated to an emergent familiarity with the Chinese contexts of star-centered commerce to which fans almost inevitably drifted.

For some outlying fans, Japanese specialty shops were a destination; as one fan of Taiwanese boy band F4 wrote upon hearing of China Center's closing,

This was the first place that I was able to touch F4. I can still remember the excitement that I – a country fan who had never seen [idol] goods – felt when I entered the store. At that time, the shop was located near Tennōji Station in Abeno Marche. It was a small shop, but my first impression was “There are so many F4 things...” It was fun just picking them up and looking at them, and there were so many things I wanted...my daughter, who was with me, was mortified. After that, I'd use the excuse of checking on my daughter to go to

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<sup>127</sup> Chaplin, *Japanese Love Hotels*, 84.

Kyoto, and while there I always made my way to the store.<sup>128</sup>

Others made use of the mail-order services of Nishimoto Shōji and Cine City Hong Kong, both of which predated the opening of their physical shops, as well as China Center. A Kanagawa-based fan explains this in her note to *Hong Kong Stars News*, writing,

Even here in the almost-sticks there are old ladies like me who are into Hong Kong cinema. Actually, except for my husband and, of course, 2 or 3 friends, no one knows that I'm a huge fan of Hong Kong movies (※ the man and woman at the video store do know)...fortunately, because I'm employed part-time, I have a comparatively large amount of free time and listen to CDs or watch videos during the daytime. Why the secrecy? Obviously, at my age (40) I'm embarrassed beyond words to be such a passionate fan of Hong Kong films, and to be in love with Yun-fat, Andy, Leslie, and Jet. But when I anxiously called Nishimoto to order a copy of *High Risk*, which I had seen mentioned in *Screen* magazine, the girl answering the phone was so kind to me. For me, the impetus to call came from the knowledge that there were people all over the country who, with just one phone call, were buying videos and CDs, and it made me realize how easily I could see the faces of Hong Kong stars if I just took that first step.<sup>129</sup>

For yet other fans, both urban and not, the drive to consumption of Hong Kong media and star-related goods was the impetus for overseas travel to Hong Kong itself.

Particularly given the substantial price markup of VCDs in Japan, where one popular retailer regularly sold licensed Hong Kong movies on VCD for ¥3,980/title (a 300%+ increase over Hong Kong prices), as well as the strong yen of the late 1980s through the mid-1990s and the relatively low cost of travel from Japan to Hong Kong,<sup>130</sup> repeat travel to Hong Kong for the express purpose of star-centered shopping became a

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<sup>128</sup> *F4 My hanseiki ritānzu!* blog, August 17, 2008. <http://tosa-f4.jugem.jp/?eid=59> (accessed on February 23, 2011).

<sup>129</sup> T.C., "Letter to Hong Kong" Vol. 13, May 1, 1996, 10.

<sup>130</sup> Sakai, "The Japanese Community," E-book.

common activity among fans. As self-described “Hong Kong addict”<sup>131</sup> Mizuta Naho writes,

When Hong Kong entertainment fans travel to Hong Kong, they don’t really run around buying up brand-name goods. Instead, their goal is to pick up CDs that are half as expensive as in Japan, videos and LDs of films that haven’t been released in Japan, idol albums and photographs; even more, connoisseurs corner the market on film and music specialty books at bookstores, and run around searching for out-of-print used records on Cat Street. I even have friends who regularly exceed economy class luggage weight restrictions by 10 kilos (that is, 30 kilos!) suitcases full of CDs. In fact, this is a different pattern of activity than that of regular tourists. Sometimes [fans] head towards the ‘weight-reducing soap’, but only if it’s on their way to someplace else.<sup>132</sup>

Through domestic travel to urban specialty shops in Japan and overseas travel to Hong Kong itself, as well as the use of mail-order to obtain Hong Kong star-related media and goods, Japanese women became participants in a translocal marketplace that circumvented the narrow Japanese distribution of Hong Kong films. Articulated with the cult-inflected fan subjectivity produced by such sites of alternative consumption, this marketplace effectively mobilized the “emotional energies [that] travel across cultural boundaries”<sup>133</sup> in the trans-cult-ural reimagination of Japanese women’s roles as popular culture consumers.

### **The Domesticity of Cult**

In a 1997 fan letter to Nishimoto Shōji’s monthly *Hong Kong Stars News* catalog, a Yokohama woman described her acquisition of a VCD player, writing,

I have finally obtained a VCD player for my home. Until now, I watched [movies] on my personal computer, but they just aren’t the same on a small

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<sup>131</sup> Mizuta Naho, “Aidoru ni chikazuke! (Get close to idols!), in *Wonderland Traveler 6: Honkon hatsunetsu dokuhon*, ed. Inoue Hiromu (Tokyo: Takarajimasha, 1996), 86.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Ma, “Translocal Spatiality,” 133.

screen. Nonetheless, since it's just for my own enjoyment (here, the only software available is anime and X-rated...), I thought it was a little too expensive and didn't tell my husband that I wanted a player. But after seeing me look through the catalog at the end of every day, he just said, "If you want one that badly just buy it; in return, order me some Vivian or Rosamund VCDs." Without my knowledge, my husband had gotten into Hong Kong movies...now we watch Hong Kong films together every night....Isn't the good thing about video that you can watch just the good parts over and over? If you don't grasp everything on the first go, as you watch it again and again you start to figure out what's happening. (And every time you watch it, it's fun to discover new things.) My seven year-old daughter is completely unable to read subtitles, but she manages to figure out the story and has fun watching.<sup>134</sup>

While this anecdote is interesting for what it says about the pleasures of what Klinger has termed "replay culture,"<sup>135</sup> of equal interest here are the ways in which this woman's fandom and media consumption are accommodated within a family setting. In his autobiographical account of becoming a media fan, scholar Matt Hills observes that "I would never have embarked upon the life of a fan...had it not been for the encouragement, indulgence, and tacit legitimation offered by my family,"<sup>136</sup> by which he means that his youthful *Doctor Who* fandom was not simply tolerated within, but enabled by, his family. Particularly as a minor dependent within the family, Hills's fandom was facilitated in large part through the magnanimity of his parents: "My media consumption was regulated by my parents when I was a young child, but regardless of...the use of corporeal punishment, and the often used threat of being sent to my room, I was never banned from watching my favorite TV programs and objects of fandom."<sup>137</sup> Hills's deceptively mundane observation is, in fact,

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<sup>134</sup> S.K., "Letter to Hong Kong" Vol. 25, 12.

<sup>135</sup> Klinger, "Becoming Cult," 3.

<sup>136</sup> Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 87.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.



extraordinary, overlaying his parents' implicit respect for his own valuation of a decidedly unproductive pursuit and, through it, their respect for his personhood.

The female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan was punctuated by this same kind of convergence of family and fannish identity. Anglophone research on women's practices of media consumption within the home historically has centered on a binary between submission to and subversion of gender expectations, in which more time-consuming, invested fandoms constitute the greatest challenge to patriarchal institutions. Janice Radway's 1984 study of romance novel readers advanced the idea that, for many women, the act of reading novels that reinforced an ideal patriarchy was one way in which they articulated suppressed "dissatisfaction, longing, and protest"<sup>138</sup> over the less-than-ideal conditions within which they conducted their lives. The ways such conditions were reflected in families' gendered uses of media technologies was the subject of Ann Gray's subsequent research of female television viewers in the United Kingdom. Like the subjects of Radway's work, the women of Gray's 1992 study were dominated within a patriarchal hierarchy of media consumption in which husbands overwhelmingly controlled purchasing decisions, the use of media devices, and the choice of programming to watch. This media hierarchy reflected both the broader division of labor within households, as well as gendered notions of leisure time that privilege men's 'right' to relaxation, simultaneously producing women's "feelings of guilt at taking time off, whether it be to read a book or watch television." In Camille Bacon-Smith's seminal 1992 examination of female writers of *Star Trek* fan fiction, she argues that the penning of slash stories by women

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<sup>138</sup> Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 215.

constituted overt resistance to the patriarchal structures described by Radway and Gray, “a subversive act undertaken by housewives and librarians, schoolteachers and data input clerks, secretaries and professors of medieval literature, under the very noses of husbands and bosses who *would not approve*, and children who *should not be exposed* to such acts of blatant civil disobedience.”<sup>139</sup> Despite evidence to the contrary in the figure of one fan who had “won the support of her husband”<sup>140</sup> in pursuing her fannish activity, Bacon-Smith emphasizes the radical disruptiveness of women’s intense fandom within the domestic sphere.

There has been little subsequent research on female fans in the home since these studies were conducted, with the result that much of the academic discourse on female fandom takes as a starting point the idea that women are necessarily marginalized in the media contexts of their own homes, and thus focusing on the ability of fannish practices to articulate women’s resistance of gender expectations. On the one hand, such an emphasis draws attention to the sheer force of female fandom as a phenomenon to be reckoned with; on the other hand, the assumption of fandom-as-patriarchal resistance has resulted in the *de facto* erasure of women immersed in household gender roles from scholarly work on fandom. In the context of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, a similar erasure was effected by that very discourse of women’s internationalist Asianism that characterized its representation in the Japanese mass media. Here, housewives, mothers, and daughters, if not vanished, faded in the depiction of fans as almost entirely young, professional, affluent women with few, if any, domestic ties to inhibit their fannish

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<sup>139</sup> Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women*, 3. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

activity. As constituted in the Japanese media, these fans parted freely with both their (prodigious) free time and disposable income in a frivolous pursuit of stars justified only by their superlative fulfillment of gender expectations. As described in a 2002 essay in the newsweekly *AERA*,

They have accumulated ordinary life experiences such as romance and marriage. They are efficient workers and have built a surplus of time and money. The period in their lives when they can expect to relax and seek out their next play [*asobi*] without destroying their lifestyles coincides with a relaxing of the constrictions of being the best. This [period] is their 30s. That may be why career-minded thirtysomethings have awakened to the pleasures of sudden fandom.<sup>141</sup>

In its assertion that women can (symbolically, at least) have it all – career, marriage, and fandom,<sup>142</sup> this article seems to constitute a counterargument to the findings of Radway and, in particular, Gray. Yet, the implicit expectation of women’s fulfilled responsibilities, both within the home and in the professional world, as a prerequisite for their fannish indulgences in fact reinforces a patriarchal hierarchy of gendered leisure time analogous to that observed by Gray. Moreover, the ‘*yūtōsei*’<sup>143</sup> (overachiever) woman offered here as a model fan serves to rationalize and contain female fans in general, both through its emphasis on ‘good’ fandom, as well as through its erasure of fans whose domestic sphere of activity marks them as potentially disruptive of the gender status quo.

It is the potentiality of disruption caused by these women’s fandom that differentiates them from the viewers and readers of earlier research, insofar as its realization is not a foregone conclusion but, rather, one possible iteration of the

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<sup>141</sup> Irokawa, “Barikyari,” 48.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

intersection of fandom and home. The female fandom of Hong Kong stars in Japan was not populated solely by professional women, single or otherwise, but by women fully implicated in the range of activities available to them. On the one hand, echoing that earlier scholarship, not all fannish activity was met with approbation within the home. As one Kyoto fan of Andy Lau writes, “On New Year’s Eve, I received the Andy calendar and photographs I had wanted...it took some courage to hang them [on the wall], but I made the decision to do it. My husband and kids made fun of me when they got home, but I just replied, ‘What’s the problem? After all, this is the best way for me to stay young.’”<sup>144</sup> For another 24-year-old woman, her role as mother to small children aged five, three, and one meant not being able to attend an Andy Lau concert,<sup>145</sup> while a 31-year-old woman from Saitama notes that, since becoming a fan of Leslie Cheung, she has been distracted towards her mother.<sup>146</sup>

Yet, more than family responsibilities, it was the broad gendering of frugality in Japan that conflicted most with fans’ activities and acquisitions.<sup>147</sup> In the September 1999 newsletter of fan club Next Club Hong Kong, responses to a questionnaire about fans’ “true feelings” (*honne*) about being Hong Kong star fans suggested that the amount of money deemed necessary to participate in “somewhat deep”<sup>148</sup> fandom constituted a key point of anxiety. Asked “What have you gained/lost as a fan?” respondents overwhelmingly pointed to their diminished bank accounts as a clear loss. One 40-year-old Tokyo woman laments, “[I spent] ¥1,500 on a Thai magazine just

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<sup>144</sup> M.C., “Letter to Hong Kong” Vol. 14, 10.

<sup>145</sup> Anon., “Letter to Hong Kong” Vol. 20, 12.

<sup>146</sup> T.N., *ALL* Vol. 3, 3.

<sup>147</sup> Andrew Gordon (1997), “Managing the Japanese Household”; Joanna Liddle and Sachiko Nakajima (2000), *Rising Suns, Rising Daughters*; Sheldon Garon (2002), “Saving for ‘My Own Good and the Good of the Nation.’”

<sup>148</sup> “Honkon myōjō o sasaeru fuan no honne,” *ALL* Vol. 3, 3.

because it featured Koharu [Jordan Chan] (only on the cover). It's frightening to think how much money I've spent since I became a fan of Jackie Chan 10 years ago." Similarly, a 37-year-old Tokyo woman writes, "[Being a fan] costs money. For buying goods, joining various organizations, and obtaining information!" This high cost – labeled "Leslie-*binbō*" (Leslie-poor) by a 34-year-old Niigata fan of Leslie Cheung – is echoed in the observation of a 43-year-old woman that, "It costs quite a bit of money. So much that I can't tell my husband."<sup>149</sup> Such concerns about the money involved in women's intense fandom derived from their historical figuration as "professional" housewives (*sengyō shufu*)<sup>150</sup> responsible for, among other things, a family's financial affairs. The professional housewife was a wholly modern construct that supplanted the diversity of roles performed by women (and men) in premodern households as "the rise of industrialization, commercialization, and waged labor"<sup>151</sup> translated to the increasing separation of masculine and feminine spheres of activity. As middle-class men were increasingly conscripted into white collar jobs, often at no small physical distance from the home, women were encouraged to assume a household leadership role and, in particular, become good stewards of family finances. Today, the plethora of pastel-colored, flowery *kakeibo nikki* (household ledgers) that appear annually on stationery shop shelves is a continuing reminder of the importance placed on women's role as household manager.

Through their analysis of uses of the term "*shufu*" (housewife) in Taisho Period (1912-1926) issues of the magazine *Shufu no tomo* (The housewives' companion),

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ishii and Jarkey, "The Housewife is Born," 35.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 39.

Kazumi Ishii and Nerida Jarkey observe that the same media mechanisms that constructed the modern housewife as a “self-sacrifici[ng]...efficient manager of her household”<sup>152</sup> also encouraged her to embrace a modern appearance and attitude through “uncritical”<sup>153</sup> consumption. Yet, I would argue that the “modern” logic that guided such consumption in fact aligned it closely with its seemingly antithetical frugal ideal, insofar as both were part of a larger project of ‘modernizing’ the emerging Japanese nation-state through the nuclear family. Indeed, recent East Asian iterations of fashionably conspicuous consumption, exemplified throughout the 1990s in travel to Hong Kong for the purpose of ‘shopping and gourmet’,<sup>154</sup> can, in this sense, equally be understood as the logical expansion of ‘modern’ consumption practices to account for an increasingly regional marketplace, within which Japanese women are cosmopolitan consumers par excellence.

Understood in this way, it was not women’s use of money, per se, that constituted a point of tension in women’s commodified pursuit of Hong Kong stars. Rather, this tension was located in the clash of seemingly contradictory, but practically contiguous, exhortations to frugality and conspicuous consumption with *inconspicuous* – in the sense that fannish consumption does not contribute to a expression of anything but the fan’s own affective interests – consumption. Yet, even here, any guilt that women felt over their uses of money in the pursuit of Hong Kong stars was mitigated by its place within broader patterns of affective consumption.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Here, “shopping” refers specifically to the acquisition of comparatively low-cost, brand-name goods – frequently European and American – at high-profile shopping centers, rather than the purchase of ‘Chinese’ goods.

Asked what they formerly did with the money now used on Hong Kong stars, the 40-year-old Tokyo fan responds, “Probably [I bought] brand goods. Lately I wear jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers; I’ve become that kind of person.” In the same vein, the 34-year-old fan from Niigata writes, “Louis Vuitton bags, Hermès scarves, and Zinnia shoes.” For others, Hong Kong star fandom is just the latest in a series of fannish pursuits on which women spend money; as a 30-year-old woman from Tokushima answers, “[I spent money on] the professional baseball team Yakult Swallows. I have lots of magazines and over 50 videos.” In the same way, one fan from Tochigi observes that her patterns of consumption have shifted to Hong Kong stars from “Kabuki and...theater; in a year I spent about the same amount of money as two trips to Hong Kong.”<sup>155</sup> Here, women’s fandom of Hong Kong stars does not constitute a new mode of consumption so much as its patterns are symptomatic of the broader transformation of women’s roles as consumers.

Such transformation extends to the accommodation of female fans’ activities and interests within the domestic sphere. As in the case of the woman quoted at the beginning of this section, practices of intensified fandom, characterized in particular by home video viewing, are for some fans incorporated into existing family structures, affording both women and their families new ways of understanding and engaging with one another. One young mother describes her sons’ enjoyment of Eric Suen’s music in a fan letter, writing in English and Chinese, “I have two little sons, the older son (his name is Ryotaro, 5 years old) can sing your song “戀一個愛” in Mandarin, and the younger son (his name is Keijiro, 2 years old) can dance along with his brother’s

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<sup>155</sup> “Honkon myōjō o sasaeru fuan no honne,” *ALL* Vol. 3, 3.

song. (Yes, they do!)<sup>156</sup> She includes a drawing of herself and her sons, with the Chinese caption “*Women yongyuan zhichi ni!!*” (We support you forever!!) (fig. 21).



Figure 21: Eric Suen fan with sons.

For some women, fannish activities span both the domestic and public spheres; and, here too, the ‘tacit legitimation’ of family members acknowledged by Hills is a prerequisite for participation, as in the case of a 25-year-old “ordinary housewife”<sup>157</sup> who arranges to go to Leslie Cheung’s Tokyo concert, or a Mie woman who “tenaciously persuade[s] (well, it was more like forced entry)”<sup>158</sup> her husband to allow her to attend Aaron Kwok’s Nagoya concert. One Tokyo fan of Tony Leung Ka-fai writes of watching a Golden Week television special entitled “Samayoeru Honkon” (Wandering Hong Kong), explaining,

I was really excited to be able to see my beloved Leung Ka-fai out of the blue on this program. Since I didn’t go anywhere for Golden Week, but stayed home with my children, for me it was a really happy day. I haven’t been a fan of Leung Ka-fai’s for more than 2.3 years, but last year, wanting to see him up close and in person, I went [to the city] by myself to attend the Tokyo Film

<sup>156</sup> *Our Dearest Eric dōjinshi* (September 27, 1996), 76.

<sup>157</sup> “Letter to Hong Kong” Vol. 22, 12.

<sup>158</sup> M.S., “Letters,” *popAsia* No. 12 (June 30, 1997), 68.



Festival (incidentally, I am a 35 year old housewife.)<sup>159</sup>

For other fans, their fannish activities and interests are actively facilitated by family members. Describing her two-day trip to Tokyo for the purpose of attending Leslie Cheung's 1997 World Tour concert, a Hokkaido woman concludes her account with thanks to "my husband, who sent me to Tokyo with money to spend, and to my three children, mom, and grandmother, who held down the fort while I was gone."<sup>160</sup>

Another writes of her mother and sister, "On a trip to China, they spotted a coat hanger with a picture of Jacky Cheung on it at a silk factory (in Huaxi Village), and asking for it as a souvenir for me, they were told "No one has ever asked to have anything like that before," as all the factory workers came to point and stare at the 'stupid Japanese'. Today, Jacky Cheung hangs in my closet wearing my overcoat."<sup>161</sup>

Similarly, a Wakayama woman writes,

Did everyone know there are star homepages on the Internet? (Did you know? Am I the only one who didn't know?). There was a very detailed article about the Internet in the monthly *Honkon Tsūshin* with a column of the homepages of famous stars. Imagine my happiness when I saw Jet Li's name! My heart danced when my son (a high school senior) agreed to my entreaties to access his page in exchange for a promise to raise his allowance. There was so much information there!<sup>162</sup>

While a patriarchal hierarchy yet underlies the 'permission' needed to attend a concert, or the gendered technological competence required to access a webpage on the Internet, these anecdotes share in common a sense that women are participants in, not victims of, domestic life, a stark contrast with two-dimensional notions of marriage in Japan (or elsewhere) as a wholly patriarchal institution within which the

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<sup>159</sup> K.S., "Letter to Hong Kong" Vol. 15, 14.

<sup>160</sup> K.K., "Letter to Hong Kong," Vol. 22, 12.

<sup>161</sup> *Honkon den'ei jō* 4, 227-8.

<sup>162</sup> K.M. "Letter to Hong Kong" Vol. 18, 10.

wishes of wives are subordinate to those of husbands. Nancy Rosenberger describes Japanese women's domestic lives in the 1990s as inflected by an affluence that afforded women the opportunity "for growing mobility and independence, flying with the ideas of diversification and individualization beyond the images dreamed by government bureaucrats."<sup>163</sup> While fully implicated in a gendered division of labor within the household, women were nonetheless able to forge 'extracurricular' subjectivities through couples' "mutual tolerance of multiply layered lives" that "ensured women's space for empowerment around a personhood of mobility and experimentation when they were 'off duty'."<sup>164</sup> Understood in this way, the cult and transcultural fan subjectivities that interpellated Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars were part of women's ongoing attempts to forge a "hybrid personhood that brings together a sense of self (*jibun*),"<sup>165</sup> as expressed through "spontaneous and societal activities identified with work and enjoyment away from familial responsibilities,"<sup>166</sup> with those responsibilities that yet gave their lives meaning.

## Conclusion

The distinction made by Hong Kong cult fans and stars alike of the fundamental difference of Japanese women's fandom of Hong Kong cinema notwithstanding, this chapter has illustrated the ways in which female fans' material patterns of Hong Kong film and star consumption produced in them a fan subjectivity that was at once 'cult' and transcultural. The affective origins of this fandom, I have

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<sup>163</sup> Rosenberger, *Gambling with Virtue*, 137.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

argued, lay in the structural affinities of the Japanese and Hong Kong entertainment industries of the 1980s and the ways in which popular stars of both places were expected to perform their stardom. In particular, the shared valuing of stars' relatability and approachability translated, for Japanese fans, into a seemingly paradoxical sense of intimacy with the stars of another culture. This intimacy was fostered and heightened by women's pursuit of Hong Kong media outside the official distribution channels of the Japanese media industry. In particular, the knowledges required by women to seek out favorite stars' films on VCD, as well as the sites of such consumption, combined in the production of what I have tentatively termed a 'trans-cultural' fan subjectivity that was at once cultish in its intensity and desire for 'ownership', as well as transcultural in its performance by fans. Not simply the purview of a narrow swath of 'unencumbered' single women, this intense fandom was pursued by a diversity of women whose mandated roles as both household managers and conspicuous consumers was often at odds with their deeply affective, personal fannish consumption. Yet, as I have shown, these women's fandom was frequently aided and abetted – both explicitly and tacitly – by family members who recognized their right to self-fulfillment.

Within the domestic context, Japanese women's fandom of Hong Kong stars can thus be understood as one way in which they forged "a sense of self" at once independent of, and yet intertwined with, their roles as mothers, wives, and workers. These selves, as I have illustrated in this chapter, were at once cultish and transcultural, adopting the linguistic and semiotic trappings of Hong Kong cinema towards a particularly Japanese iteration of star fandom. What remains unclear,

however, is how fans understood the inherent transcultural differences of their own national cultural context and that of Hong Kong stars. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will explore Japanese female fans' encounters with, and negotiations of, linguistic, cultural, national, and geographical difference that arose in their fannish activities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE:

#### TRANSCULTURAL FANDOM IN TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT

The next day, Leslie met us on the Caesars ground floor to take us up to his suite. As usual, he poured on the charm: doting, droll, sweet as a cinnamon roll. But when he realized he was being pursued down a remote corridor by one of his myriad Japanese groupies (Leslie was elected Best Actor 10 years in a row by Japan's 17,000-member Cinecity fan club), he spun around and shouted, in English, "Go away! Get the hell out of here!" The young woman receded; I like to think it was exactly what she wanted. Anyone can get a star's autograph. But to receive a flash of his rage – private Leslie ad-libbing the movie Leslie – is a compliment masquerading as an insult.

Richard Corliss, "Days of Being Leslie"<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

By definition, transcultural fandom involves the intersection of at least two distinct cultures, that of the fan and that of the fannish object. In the encounter between Leslie Cheung, *Time* magazine film critic Richard Corliss, and an anonymous Japanese female fan, cultures of identity – star, critic, and fan – combined with those of nationality and ethnicity in an intensely ambivalent moment. Cheung, having assumed the persona of a transnationally mobile Asian film star, reacts less to the fan herself than to her embodiment of a denigrated mode of fandom that prizes intimacy with celebrities. Caught in a global cinephilic calculus that equates inapproachability with exclusivity and seriousness, Cheung lashes out at his fan's unwitting ability to undercut his efforts at courting Western approbation by rejecting her in a panicked

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Corliss, "That Old Feeling: Days of Being Leslie," *Time Magazine*, April 7, 2003, <http://www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,440214,00.html> (accessed August 14, 2009).

moment of transcultural chaos. Corliss, as the star's sympathetic American interlocutor, turns the outburst into an example of the idiosyncratic professionalism through which he paints his portrait of the star. He reads this anonymous "Japanese groupie" through his own cultural lenses and personal affection for Cheung: unable to reconcile the earnest fan with his own perception of Cheung's ingratiating star persona, Corliss ultimately erases her altogether in a whiff of wishful thinking.

But what of the fan? Her discursive disappearance notwithstanding, the sense that she has been at best misunderstood, and at worst somehow wronged, haunts the sympathetic reader. Cheung's pan-Asian stardom, to which he points with no little pride throughout Corliss's profile, was predicated on the passion of fans like this woman, and his reaction to her apparent transgression belies his own role in the cultivation of an affective star-fan relationship. Yet, what I am particularly interested in here is the politics of this woman's pursuit of Cheung down a lonely Las Vegas corridor, an act of seeming simplicity overlaying a framework of transnational mobility, consumption, and affective pleasure that, in this case, ultimately collapses in her fundamental misreading of cultural cues both fannish and transnational. The moment of Cheung's rejection of his Japanese fan is one in which cultures collide with a particularly invested fan subjectivity that is predicated on feelings of intimacy with, and ownership of, the star (persona), marking a clash of internal imaginings and external realities that constitutes the fundamental problematic of transcultural fandom studies. Andy Ruddock has suggested that "the politics of fan research involves asking how rich an interaction the fan has with the cultural world,"<sup>2</sup> pointing

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<sup>2</sup> Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, 89.

to recent developments in the articulation of fandom studies and object-relations theory<sup>3</sup> as a means of understanding how fans “find security in a changing world through external objects whose familiarity creates feelings of comfort and power.”<sup>4</sup> Understood in this way, we can conceptualize the central question of transcultural fandom studies as what happens when these external objects, made familiar through activities and patterns of consumption that give fans affective possession of them, provoke the very instabilities and discomfort they are intended to assuage?

Within research of transcultural fandom, the transnational backdrop against which it frequently occurs at once informs and threatens to overwhelm its analysis. As Matt Hills argues in the context of Western anime fandom, scholarship of transnationally-situated transcultural fandoms historically has been “set against [the] familiar narratives of transcultural misrecognition, transnational Othering and the nation as iconically-imaged ‘imagined community’.”<sup>5</sup> Such narratives, while not irrelevant, have emerged less from empirical research of specific fan practices and activities than from a well-meaning desire on the part of academics to advance what Iwabuchi terms a “critical”<sup>6</sup> transcultural fan studies. Critical transcultural fan studies is understood to be more attuned to the “wider sociohistorical process of uneven globalization”<sup>7</sup> as it plays out within fandom, than research in which “what is at stake is not the degradation or romanticization of fans but a disregard for the complicated

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<sup>3</sup> Roger Silverstone (1993), “Television, Ontological Security and the Transitional Object”; Matt Hills (2002), *Fan Cultures*; Cornel Sandvoss (2005), *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*.

<sup>4</sup> Ruddock, *Investigating Audiences*, 89.

<sup>5</sup> Hills, “Transcultural Otaku,” 2.

<sup>6</sup> Iwabuchi, “Undoing Inter-national Fandom,” 88.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

processes of people's media consumption."<sup>8</sup> Particularly set against not only the counter/hegemonic push-and-pull that characterizes media consumption in late capitalism, this is a not-inconsequential imperative. Yet, in calling for greater socio-historical contextualization within transcultural fan studies, Iwabuchi disregards precisely those "complicated processes of people's media consumption" that he here calls for. As Patrick Murphy and Marwan Kraidy observe, any understanding of the implications of media globalization for locally-situated communities and individuals must be sensitive not only to the "range of political and economic forces"<sup>9</sup> at work, but also, critically, to "distinct reception communities, in addition to subject positions tied to gender, ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation."<sup>10</sup> Our research of "the cross-border circulation and consumption of media culture under uneven process of globalization"<sup>11</sup> cannot concern itself solely with the "serious consideration of the sociohistorical contexts in which people passionately consume/appropriate media texts, and...the cultural politics and cultural economy involved in their active consuming practices."<sup>12</sup> Rather, consideration of the ways in which the contradictory, chaotic forces of globalization play out in fandom should proceed from our informed understanding of fan behaviors, motivations, and processes of meaning-making as driven not by "marginalized identity politics...coping with the tyranny of everyday life in the neoliberal world...[or] the transnational audience/fan alliance against the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>9</sup> Murphy & Kraidy, "Towards an Ethnographic Approach," 7.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Iwabuchi, "Undoing Inter-national Fandom," 88.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



control of media culture production and distribution by global media culture industries,<sup>13</sup> but by affective pleasures and investments.

In his overview and analysis of the study of affect in research of fandoms, Hills observes that work aspiring to retain a recognizable claim to ideological critique historically has positioned fans' affective interest in media such that it cannot "underpin the generation of new cultural formations and context. The fans' 'oppositional subculture' must always precede and culturally support fan interpretation and affect, rather than vice versa."<sup>14</sup> Seeking to reinstate affect to a generative place within fan studies, Hills reads it against the backdrop of the object-relations theory of British psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott. A less trauma-infused alternative to Freudian and Lacanian theories of infantile separation from the mother, Winnicott proposed that a child's attainment of autonomy from the mother is predicated on its use of what he termed the "transitional object."<sup>15</sup> Winnicott theorized that through experiential play with the transitional object, the child enters into what he calls a "potential space"<sup>16</sup> in which s/he is able to internalize the object sufficiently to imaginatively create (i.e., imbue it with meaning) and manipulate it. In the context of fan studies, in which media constitute the transitional object, the shift from the external – what culture 'does' – to the internal – what meanings fans give it – is critical, insofar as it ceases to compel productivity as a baseline for serious consideration. The act of playing leaves open the possibility that nothing is produced

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 93.

<sup>15</sup> Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 54-5.

beyond the subjective enjoyment of an object, which in turn disarticulates fandom from a necessary relationship to its sociopolitical context.

A the same time, the possibility of transformation is always latent in the potential space of play, and it is in this sense that object relations theory speaks specifically to the question of the role and effects of nation and culture within transnationally-situated transcultural fandoms. Such fans typically bring their own (fan) cultural competencies to bear on their affective enjoyment of transcultural media, merging domestic cultural repertoires and foreign media in a potential space of perfect understanding. Yet, in so doing, they flirt with the dissonances and disjunctures through which cultural subjectivities may be transformed, and to assume that such transformations are necessarily 'progressive' in the "normative...bourgeois-leftist [sense] common in cultural studies"<sup>17</sup> is to underestimate the intensity of the clash of imagination and reality. If, as Hills suggests, media "texts can be used creatively by fans to manage tensions between inner and outer worlds," in the transnationally-situated transcultural context they equally can be disillusioning, destabilizing the ontological security of the fan in such a way as to compel a choice between progression and regression.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars in the 1980s and 1990s negotiated cultural differences and dissonances that were sometimes at odds with the affective framework of fan-star intimacy and ownership through which they derived meaning from their fandom. I begin with an analysis of fans' production of transformative works in the form of star-centered

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<sup>17</sup> Pennycook, *Global Englishes*, E-book.

*dōjinshi* (fanzines); here, I use the term “transformative” to refer to “creative works about characters or settings created by fans of the original work, rather than by the original creators...includ[ing] but...not limited to fanfiction, real person fiction, fan vids, and graphics.”<sup>18</sup> I argue that, with few exceptions, fans’ deployment of (trans)cultural markers such as language and geography was in the service of constructing a hermetically – and hermeneutically – sealed imaginative space that reinforced, rather than disrupted, women’s fan subjectivities. I continue with a discussion of Japanese fans’ practices of transnational film-related travel and ‘*okkake*’ (star-chasing), examining the ways in which women’s affective and material experiences of Hong Kong star-centered geographies at once contributed to and threatened their sense of intimacy with stars. Finally, I consider Japanese women’s engagement with “Hong Kong” as it coexists alongside their geographically situated fandom, exploring both how star-centered fan practices exceed the limitations of what John Tomlinson terms the “cultural ‘insulation’”<sup>19</sup> of the transnationally mobile business class, as well as highlight the limits of fans’ sense of cultural proximity to Hong Kong.

### **Fantasy Paradise**

In the pre-Internet days of the late 1980s and early 1990s, *dōjinshi* arguably were the most abundant and far-reaching form of female fan production in Japan. In both scholarly and popular writing, *dōjinshi* have come to be synonymous with *yaoi*,

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<sup>18</sup> Organization for Transformative Works, “Glossary” <http://transformativeworks.org/glossary/13#term441>. (accessed December 18, 2010)

<sup>19</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 8.

an acronym of the phrase “*Yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi*” (no buildup, no climax, no meaning), signifying works by primarily amateur female manga artists and writers that center on male/male romantic and sexual relationships.<sup>20</sup> Within so-called ‘*parodi*’ *dōjinshi*, which like fan-fiction, are not original but transformative works, a gender-bending constellation of *yaoi*, *bidanshi* (beautiful man), and *bishōnen* (beautiful boy) stories punctuates fans’ reimagining of stars; in this sense, and mirroring work on analogous practices of slash production in the U.S. and U.K. contexts,<sup>21</sup> such works have been understood as one way in which women create a discursive space through which they can escape patriarchal hierarchy and indulge in alternative sexual subjectivities that have no necessary relationship to traditional gender roles.<sup>22</sup> The *dōjinshi* produced by female fans of Hong Kong stars similarly was characterized by a turn to the transformation of favorite stars through a *mélange* of cultural and sexual signifiers. In this sense, it is tempting to argue that transcultural *dōjinshi* offer a site for the negotiation and (re)imagination of fans’ own marginalized cultural identities.

Yet, I would argue that such *dōjinshi* in fact articulated subtexts of Hong Kong star personae that were pleasurable to fans less for the ways in which they mirrored fans’ own sexual or gender longings, than for the ways in which they enriched and added layers of meaning to fans’ appreciation of stars themselves. Ishikawa Yū draws

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<sup>20</sup> In psychoanalytic terms, *yaoi* closely reflects Winnicott’s emphasis of ‘playing’, insofar as it offers an antidote to the relentless drive to (sexual) (re)productivity of Freudian psychoanalysis. In place of Freud’s idea of the superiority of the vaginal orgasm, presumably evoked in the context of heterosexual intercourse, over the ‘immature’, un(re)productive, and frequently autoerotic clitoral orgasm, Winnicott validates the pleasure of playing (with oneself) free of the drive to (re)produce. Similarly, the emphasis in *yaoi* on deferred and ‘unproductive’ pleasures effectively rejects the reproductive imperative.

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins (1992), *Textual Poachers*; Bacon-Smith (1992), *Enterprising Women*.

<sup>22</sup> Vincent, “A Japanese Electra,” 72.

a distinction between original and *parodī dōjinshi*, observing that the latter primarily communicate “favor towards the original text, love for a character, [and] even the active desire to ‘inform others of feelings of affection’”<sup>23</sup> for a fan object. Put differently, the first purpose of ‘parody’ *dōjinshi* is the expression of pleasure in, and affinity for, a given fan text.<sup>24</sup> In the case of star fandom, this takes the form of stories, vignettes, commentary, and drawings that exaggerate, manipulate, and talk back to the full spectrum of a given star persona, by way of asserting and strengthening symbolic ownership of that star. Within *dōjinshi* centered on tightly managed Japanese idols, their depiction by fans reflects the cultural conversation surrounding them, deriving from their ubiquity on television and in concerts, the mass media, and the occasional feature film. Fans of Hong Kong stars similarly drew from available media discourses of individual stars in their own *dōjinshi*, with the difference that these stars’ relative invisibility within the Japanese mainstream meant that stage and, in particular, screen personae were privileged in fan-produced works. Critically, such personae often were linked both explicitly and implicitly with discourses of queerness as it played out on Hong Kong cinema screens of the 1990s; in this sense, *dōjinshi* depictions of alternative sexual and gender identities may be understood as one way in which fans sought to ‘master’ affective knowledges and appreciation of stars.

In the Leslie Cheung-centered *dōjinshi* *Oh! My God*, fans drew on his cinematic and extra-filmic star image in reimagining him in a variety of Japanese popular cultural personae. The *yaoi* fan fiction “Yaemugura,” based on the mainstream manga

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<sup>23</sup> Ishikawa, “Niji sōsaku,” 87.

<sup>24</sup> The texts from which ‘parody’ *dōjinshi* typically derive are mainstream manga; however, films, television programs, and idols are also considered originary texts for the purposes of such works.

*Onmyōji*, about a 10<sup>th</sup> Century diviner and exorcist, cast Cheung in the role of a Heian Period (794-1192) Japanese courtier-cum-demon. Described as “more refined than a woman,”<sup>25</sup> Cheung’s character, Sakurabe no Kokuei,<sup>26</sup> is pictured in the frontispiece to the story in Heian robes, peeking slyly from under a cloak, his lips drawn full and characteristically “pouty”<sup>27</sup> (fig. 22). No random characterization, the depiction



Figure 22: Leslie Cheung as Sakurabe no Kokuei

of Cheung as classical male siren in fact drew from film performances that foregrounded what popular kabuki *onnagata* (female impersonator) Bandō Tamasaburō described, in a Japanese-produced volume about Cheung, as the star’s “delicate presence.”<sup>28</sup> In particular, the character was informed by Cheung’s portrayal

<sup>25</sup> Azuri Amame, “Yaemugura,” *Oh! My God* Vol. 18, February 22, 2002, 18.

<sup>26</sup> “Kokuei” is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters comprising Cheung’s given name, Kwok-wing (國榮).

<sup>27</sup> Corliss, online.

<sup>28</sup> *Resurī: Resurī Chan no subete* (All About Leslie Cheung) (Tokyo: Sangyō Henshū Sentā, 1999) 119.

of the androgynously sensual Cheng Dieyi in Chen Kaige's 1994 *Farewell, My Concubine* (fig. 23); yet, in a playful twist, it equally evoked the female ghost of *Rouge* (Stanley Kwan, 1988), positioning Cheung in the role of the betrayed Fleur (Anita Mui), who has preceded Cheung's own aged 12<sup>th</sup> Young Master in death (fig. 24). Where Fleur turns sadly away from the decrepit Young Master, however, "Yaemugura" finds a way for the star-crossed lovers to achieve reunion:



**Figure 23:** Leslie Cheung as Cheng Dieyi



**Figure 24:** Leslie Cheung and Anita Mui in *Rouge*

The bamboo blind rose. Behind it, an old man sat, his body supported by a young girl. "Kokuei..." the old man murmured, holding out his hand. The hand trembled in the air.

"Tsu-Tsurutoku!" the demon cried out in a low voice.

"Ah, there's no mistaking your voice! Meeting like this again...even though my eyes no longer see...even though my body no longer moves...I've never, ever forgotten you...wonderful!" The old man's unseeing eyes were awash in tears.

"You...came...back."

"I wanted to see you...so much... One year, I took a fast ship. But it was shipwrecked and I was set adrift on the sun-soaked open sea."

“Oh...Tsurutoku! Why didn't you come back here?” The demon's body trembled violently.

“For a long time, Lord Tsururoku was without memory,” said Seimei.<sup>29</sup> The old man turned his face in the direction of the demon's voice.

“Kokuei...when I remembered you, I was no longer young. Even so, wanting to see you, I went to the capital. But I caught wind of a rumor that you had died.”

“Ahhh...”

“I, I never forgot you, to the point that I could not even die. If I died, who would be left to remember you? Your lovely face...your beautiful body...the beloved person you were...who would remember? So I have lived, until I've grown ugly, I've lived, always, always remembering you...Kokuei!”

“Ahh...Tsurutoku...”

Timidly, the demon's hand reached out in the empty space and grasped that of the old man. In that moment, a cold, blue fire enveloped them both. Inside the brightly burning blue fire, the demon's body returned to the beautiful form of Kokuei. The old man's body transformed to that of a faithful young man. From within the gentle strum of the *biwa* and the brightly burning fire, the two young, beautiful men held tight to one another as their bodies ascended to the heavens.<sup>30</sup>

Star-centered fan writing, like that of character-based stories, is pleasurable in part for its inherent challenge of writing true-to-persona while simultaneously imagining scenarios that fall outside a star's usual habitus. Author/artist Azuri Amane's familiarity with Cheung's onscreen persona – his sensuality and androgyny, in particular – affords her the discursive materials through which to read him against a backdrop of popular film, manga, and *dōjinshi* (re)conceptions of Japanese historical homoeroticism,<sup>31</sup> recognizing in the one a homological affinity with the other. It can be argued that this 'translation' of Cheung's persona to a Japanese context thus brings the transcultural fan and star into closer orbit, if only symbolically. Yet, I would suggest that Azuri translates Cheung not to a “Japanese” cultural context, per se, but rather to a Japanese *fan* cultural context. *Onmyōji*, the manga series from which

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<sup>29</sup> Abeno Seimei is the titular *onmyōji* of the originary manga series from which this story derives.

<sup>30</sup> Azuri Amane, “Yaemugura,” *Oh! My God* Vol. 18, February 22, 2002, 25.

<sup>31</sup> Miller, “Extreme Makeover,” 33-43.



“Yaemugura” derives, is itself a representative *bishōnen* (beautiful boy) text; as Laura Miller observes of the title character, Seimei (who features prominently in “Yaemugura”),

In medieval folktales, statues, and paintings, Seimei is presented as a grave middle-aged man exemplary of Heian-era masculinity. He has a chubby face, thin eyes, and a pale complexion. But in the Heisei era (1989-), Seimei has been reimagined as a *bishōnen*, a beautiful young man with huge eyes, flowing locks, and a sculpted face. One cultural change this indicates is the importance of what we might term the ‘girl gaze’ in popular consumption.<sup>32</sup>

Thus understood from the perspective of popular, contemporary representations of classical Japanese culture informed by a specific ‘girl gaze’, “Yaemugura” constitutes an articulation of Japanese and Chinese popular cultures in which the nation is ancillary to the pleasures of the fan cultural.

Similarly, in the *dōjinshi* *A Moment of Romance III: Bye For [sic] Buddy*, a ‘film’ produced by Visionary Cinema Book Lala (VCB), fans use the premise of the Benny Chan film *A Moment of Romance* (1990)<sup>33</sup> to play stars Andy Lau, Leon Lai, Ekin Cheng, Jacky Cheung, and Aaron Kwok against each other in a *yaoi* fiction fashioned from the undistinguished heterosexual romance of the originary film. *Bye For Buddy* transforms the budding cinematic romance between triad member Wah Dee (Andy Lau) and rich, young student Jojo (Wu Chein-lien) into a rekindled relationship between childhood friends Wah Jai (Andy Lau) and Leon (Leon Lai), a rich college student recently returned to Hong Kong from overseas. Within the film, the romance between Wah Dee and Jojo is an excuse, rather than impetus, for a long-brewing gang war, the film showcasing Lau’s versatility as an actor through an almost schizophrenic catalog of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>33</sup> The film *A Moment of Romance III* is related to the original *A Moment of Romance* in title and cast only, and it was not produced until 1996, the year after *Bye For Buddy* was penned.

scenarios ranging from comic to tragic and everything in between. While a *Moment of Romance* is credited with launching the career of Lau's young co-star, Wu Chien-lien, it is the pop star upon whom the camera lingers in scenes of bodily mortification and emotional vulnerability, and it is precisely this vulnerability and depth of feeling that are mined for emotional resonance in *Bye For Buddy*.

As in much *yaoi* and slash fan fiction, *Bye For Buddy* makes explicit what is implicit in the ordinary text. Yet, while what is often made explicit is the latent homoeroticism of a given text, the film *A Moment of Romance* features few hints of any such subtext. Its male friendships are motivated by codes of loyalty rather than affection, and neither is the antagonistic relationship between Wah Dee and malevolent gangster Trumpet (Kwong Leung-wong) fuelled by repressed desire. Instead of exposing a homoerotic subtext in the original film, what *Bye For Buddy* makes explicit is the fundamental star-centeredness of *A Moment of Romance*, in which star persona and character are nearly interchangeable. Not unintentionally, the name of Lau's onscreen character, Wah Dee (華弟), is also one of the star's several public nicknames, and his offscreen persona is invoked in the creation of his film character. As Leung Wing-fai writes,

One of Andy Lau's most successful repeated roles was that of the petty gangster and loveable rogue, like that in the hit production *A Moment of Romance* (Benny Chan, 1990) in which he played the sentimental delinquent, 'Wah Dee'. In these early films, Lau acted in melodramatic roles that depended on his television soap opera idol image....He even looked similar as [sic] many of these characters with a cheap pair of Ray-ban sunglasses...sleeveless T-shirt, jeans and cigarette dangling from his mouth, portraying the kind of 'grassroots' male youth that became his trademark.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Leung, "Discursive Stardom," 23.

Not simple typecasting, Lau's film and television persona as something of an adult street urchin reflected widely circulating mass media stories of the star's own rough-and-tumble upbringing on the streets of Kowloon, the narrow divide between film and public personae enhancing fans' perceptions of intimacy with the star.

In *Bye For Buddy*, the VCB authors play specifically off the blurred distinction between textual and extratextual personae in creating a homoerotic romance fully centered on its stars. Lau 'reprises' his role as a gangster with a heart of gold, here named "Wah Jai" (華仔), the most widely used of Lau's public nicknames, and his supporting cast is similarly informed by their offscreen star personae: Leon Lai Ming is cast as "Leon" (written in the *katakana* syllabary<sup>35</sup> used to denote foreign names in Japanese), drawing on his bland handsomeness to set him outside the grittier Kowloon habitus of the other supporting characters. Ex-convict-turned-star Louis Koo plays Wah Jai's closest friend and would-be lover under the star's Cantonese name, Koo Tinlok, while fellow Cantopop 'Heavenly Kings' Jacky Cheung and Aaron Kwok<sup>36</sup> fill out the *dramatis personae* as Leon's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern-style confidants, also cast under real name (Cheung) and public moniker (Kwok, known popularly as Shing Jai [城仔]).

As with Wah Jai, whose character – like that of Wah Dee in *A Moment of Romance* – draws on Lau's real-life associations with Hong Kong's underclass, the story's portrayal of ancillary characters is equally dependent on their offscreen

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<sup>35</sup> Japanese language is structured on syllables comprised, in alphabetic terms, of five independent vowels (a, i, u, e, o), one singular consonant (n), and 44 consonant/vowel combinations, collectively comprising the 50 *onzu* (sound chart). These syllables are phonetically (as opposed to ideographically) represented in two syllabaries: *hiragana*, used in the transliteration of 'Japanese' words, and *katakana*, used today primarily in the representation of foreign 'loanwords'.

<sup>36</sup> The Four Heavenly Kings of Cantopop are Andy Lau, Leon Lai, Jacky Cheung, and Aaron Kwok.

personae: the naïve, callow Leon derives from Lai's image – based largely on his clean-cut appearance and tendency towards ballads and peppy pop songs – as a wide-eyed innocent who is, “honestly put, unsuited to the underworld.”<sup>37</sup> Equally, Louis Koo's wilder persona, heightened by actual time served in prison, informs his role as Wah Jai's vaguely violent, tempestuous betrayer. Indeed, as described by the VCB collective, *Bye For Buddy* is less an excuse to have characters engage in gratuitous sex (of which there is little, in any case), than to play different star personae off each other within an alternative narrative context. As the authors explain in post-story commentary,

Kaze: [*Bye For Buddy*] was really a charity film. The reason [we wrote it] is that Andy's fans and Leon's fans don't get along.

Kin: We wondered how we could make it the fault of both sides.

...

Kaze: I never thought the day would come when we'd think of the Four Heavenly Kings in this way. Until now, whenever I saw a Leon video, I always badmouthed him as “disgusting” or said I “didn't get” him. But at some point I was touched by a demon and started gradually to think “He might be cute...”

Kin: I just wanted to see the reaction of Andy fans...who like gays.<sup>38</sup>

Subsequent commentary reveals a playfully star-centric approach to the hypothetical issue of the Japanese marketing of a filmed version of their manuscript. In a discussion of the voice-casting for an inevitably dubbed version of the film to be broadcast on the NTV-circuit stalwart “Friday Roadshow,” the authors attempt to translate *Bye For Buddy* to a Japanese popular cultural context:

Kin: Okay, so if it were going to be shown on “Friday Roadshow,” who would do the voiceovers?

Kaze: That's easy! Andy would be –

Waka: Kimutaku!<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Leung, “Discursive Stardom,” 44. In 1995, Lai was cast against type as a recalcitrant hitman undergoing a midlife crisis about his chosen profession in Wong Kar-wai's *Fallen Angels*.

<sup>38</sup> *Bye For Buddy*, 20.

Kaze: Of course – it’s a given!<sup>40</sup>

Here, the VCB authors recognize an affinity between handsome delinquent Lau and Kimura Takuya, known for what blogger Timothy Shen aptly describes as a “(strangely complicated) ‘bad-boy’ image”<sup>41</sup> encompassing the star’s *bishōnen* good looks. Yet, as Sun Jung observes, the *bishōnen* is, in his many iterations, a pan-Asian phenomenon spanning not only Japan and Hong Kong, but also the *kkonminam* (flower boy) of South Korean popular culture, which itself derives in part from the same Japanese boy-band of which Kimura was a member.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, what the authors articulate here is less a specific affinity between two performers than a transcultural male aesthetic that overlays regional industrial borrowings and transformations in the targeting of regional female audiences. Put differently, these fans evince here a nascent self-awareness not as Japanese, but as transculturally-situated media consumers.

In a subsequent turn in the conversation, the authors discuss marketing tactics for their would-be film:

Kin: But what company would distribute [*Bye For Buddy*]?  
Hoshi: Prénom H?

Kin: They’ll only do it if it’s Wong Kar-wai.

Hoshi: Then we’ll have Wong Kar-wai make it.

Zen: Boo.

Kaze: Nah, he wouldn’t do it.

...

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<sup>39</sup> “Kimutaku” is the nickname of Kimura Takuya, one of the five members of Johnny’s mega-group SMAP.

<sup>40</sup> *Bye For Buddy*, 40.

<sup>41</sup> Timothy Shen, “Drama Review: Kimura Takuya Edition,” March 30, 2009, <http://blog.ningin.com/2009/03/30/drama-review-kimura-takuya-edition/> (accessed December 22, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Jung, *Korean Masculinities*, 58-9.

Hoshi: Let's say I saw it mentioned in *JUNE*<sup>43</sup> and decided to go see it. You can see that happening [*arigachi arigachi*].

Kaze: Say you were invited along with a friend who really likes homosexual [*homo-kusai*]<sup>44</sup> movies.

Hoshi: [*Bye For Buddy*] would be the special selection at a "Gay & Lesbian Film Festival."

...

Waka: It could happen!

Kaze: It would be critically acclaimed, having come to Japan after being a hit in France; but don't you think it would have to be really cool or gay-themed in order to make it today in Japan?

Hoshi: Gay-themed films do pretty well at mini-theaters.

Kin: But since the Hong Kong entertainment world still places a lot of importance on image, who would be willing to suck it up and throw himself into a gay role – among idols, that is?

...

Kin: If Wong Kar-wai said he was going to make a really pretentious, French *ennui*-style gay-themed film, [Tony] Leung Chiu-wai would probably get into it.

Kaze: Yeah, he'd probably do it.

Kin: He'd wear loose briefs that his dick would threaten to pop out of, and sit on his bed looking out the window at Montmartre or something. (figs. 25 & 26)

Hoshi: If that were the case, Prénom H would probably distribute it for us.<sup>45</sup>



**Figure 25:** VCB rendering of Tony Leung in an imagined Wong Kar-wai scene entitled "Dick-popping ennui afternoon."



**Figure 26:** Tony Leung in *Happy Together*.

<sup>43</sup> *JUNE* is a now-defunct, commercially produced magazine for women centering on stories and manga about male/male relationships and sexuality.

<sup>44</sup> "*Homo-kusai*" literally means "Homo[sexual] stink," the suffix *-kusai* [stench] signaling an uncomplimentary, if not actually derogatory, perspective.

<sup>45</sup> *Bye For Buddy*, 20; 40.

Anticipating Wong Kar-wai's 1997 film *Happy Together* and the conditions of its Japanese distribution by a full two years,<sup>46</sup> the members of the VCB collective here perform a fannish self-reflexivity that captures their awareness of themselves not (simply) as Japanese, but as Japanese fans in a globalized film marketplace.

As exemplified here, *parodi dōjinshi* draw from fans' exhaustive familiarity with star personae in order to transform them along more meaningful lines within a fannish context. The stars of Hong Kong fan *dōjinshi*, then, are imagined figures that are neither Chinese nor Japanese, but exist as an amalgam of both in a potential space where fans can experience an intensified intimacy with them. Notably, elements of Chinese and Japanese cultures are, within this space, in near-perfect accord, facilitated in no small part by the "extensive expressiveness"<sup>47</sup> of a Japanese writing system that, as Miller observes, "has four writing systems to exploit – Chinese characters, two syllabic scripts (*hiragana* and *katakana*), and the Roman alphabet."<sup>48</sup> This is particularly evident in fans' use of Chinese (both Mandarin and Cantonese) vocabulary: 演唱會 (*yanchanghui*) for "concert," 迷 (*mi*) for "fans," and 電影 (*dianying*) for "films," as well as more specialized Cantonese nicknames for local stars and Hong Kong place names. Drawing on written characters both existent and non-existent in Japanese, such terminology is intelligible to fans familiar with the Chinese contexts of the fandom at the cognitive, or imaginative, level, regardless of foreign language

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<sup>46</sup> Set in Buenos Aires rather than Montmartre, *Happy Together* starred Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Leslie Cheung, and it was executive produced and distributed in Japan by Prénom H's Hiroko Shinohara.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, "Those Naughty Teenage Girls," 230.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

ability. That is, *dōjinshi* readers can make sense of such vocabulary without ever being able to reproduce it vocally, the result being a seamless merging of cultures.<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, where disjunctures arise in *dōjinshi*, they are provoked less by the intersection of domestic and foreign cultures than the clash of fan and ‘national’ identities, in which this seamlessness is ruptured by fans’ interpellation by stars as Japanese. Such *dōjinshi* typically are not the reworkings of film texts and star personae that characterize ‘parody’, but texts that mix reportage and irreverent commentary in the commemoration of stars’ concerts and activities. A recurring theme in *2.5-D Kwok Fu-sing Japan Tour Book*, a *dōjinshi* commemorating Aaron Kwok’s first Japanese concert tour, is the star’s use of “Japanesque”<sup>50</sup> costuming and Japanese phrases, foregrounding national cultural differences between star and fans that disrupt fans’ perception of transcultural intimacy with Kwok. In both Hong Kong and Japanese performances of Kwok’s song “Temptation of the Iron Mask” throughout this concert tour, the star wore a lamé version of a kabuki costume and mixed snippets of the Japanese tune “Sakura” into his own song. The Kwok song historically has provided him with a number of performance personae – robot, goose-stepping militarist, futuristic cyborg – that effectively render any costuming little more than an empty signifier. Yet, the frank inauthenticity of Kwok’s ‘Japanese’ costuming at his

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<sup>49</sup> One example of the expendability of vocal reproduction in the *dōjinshi* context is in the appropriation of the Chinese title of Wong Kar-wai’s *Ashes of Time* (東邪西毒) by a *yaoi* artist for a sexually explicit *dōjinshi* based on the 2001 NHK year-long historical drama, *Hojō Tokimune*. As the author explains, “The title...seemed like the three-way relationship between [Konoe Moto]hira, [Hojō Toki]mune, and [Hojō Toki]suke. It doesn’t have any deep significance. It’s the title of a crappy [*unko eiga*], expensive, over-budget film by Wong Kar-wai. Since it’s in Chinese, I don’t know how it’s pronounced...but you don’t really need to know.” (*Dong xie xi du 2001 Taiga Drama* [HOZYU TOKIMUNE] *Remix Book*, 32).

<sup>50</sup> 2.5-D, 8.



Japanese concert was a concrete reminder of the cultural divide between fans and star, compelling responses that ranged from appreciative to baffled:

“That was something else. No idea who thought it up.”  
“It had real impact, in several meanings [of the word]. But it was nice[r] than I had expected.”  
“Why ‘Sakura, sakura’ – does it really fit in?”  
“I never imagined I could see this costume in Japan.”  
“I heard that Aaron himself really pushed for this outfit, but...a samurai??  
“Next time, could you do ‘Yaoya Oshichi’?”<sup>51</sup>  
“I couldn’t help laughing at the gap between him waving the *koinobori*<sup>52</sup> and singing “Listen to the Wind’s Song” (*duibuqi*,<sup>53</sup> Aaron).”<sup>54</sup>

More than this, Kwok’s (mis)use of Japanese words and phrases, and the real-world context within which they were uttered, evoked teasing (both good-natured and not), puzzlement, and even sympathy. Throughout the concert, Kwok engaged in Japanese-language repartee with the audience, deploying such words and phrases as “*tanoshii?*” (Having fun?) and “*ai shiteiru!*” (I love you!) to communicate directly with his Japanese fans. In some instances, however, misunderstandings and mispronunciations resulted in words that were unintelligible, as in the uttered “*koma*,” referring to the teddy bears (*kuma*) thrown onstage by audience members. In one instance, repeated throughout the tour, Kwok asked the audience “*Iketeru?*” meaning “sexy” or “cool.” This word is generally used to refer to someone else’s sexiness; it makes little sense as a question, the rough meaning of which might be “Are you sexy?” and fans responded accordingly:

“Nope, not sexy.”  
“Yeah, after all is said and done, I still can’t get that out of my mind.”

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<sup>51</sup> “Yaoya Oshichi” [greengrocer Yaoya] was a 17<sup>th</sup> Century girl who became the subject of numerous classical plays.

<sup>52</sup> A fish-shaped tubular flag usually hung in celebration of Children’s (Boy’s) Day.

<sup>53</sup> “I’m sorry” in Mandarin.

<sup>54</sup> 2.5-D, 58, 60, 63-64.

“I’d understand if he said “*iketeru?*” in place of “*ikiteru?*” [are you alive?]...”<sup>55</sup>

Despite this, for many fans the effort to use Japanese spoke volumes about Kwok’s dedication to his fan base, and they instead turned their critique to fellow fans: “In Osaka, the people shouting out corrections to mistaken words were too harsh. It was funny at first, but I started to feel sorry for him after awhile.”<sup>56</sup>

Kwok’s use of Japanese is recognized by others as a formulaic means of manufacturing intimacy through appeal to a national characteristic. As one fan observes of Kwok’s use of the phrase, “*Ai shiteiru*,” “I knew it was coming. At least his was guileless, unlike the ‘*Ai shitemasu*’ of Leslie’s [concert].”<sup>57</sup> The recognition here of Kwok’s interpellation of his audience as Japanese underpins much of the commentary on his use of Japanese phrases, paradoxically disrupting fans’ imagined intimacy with the star by reminding them of the difference that separates them. Ultimately, some fans negotiate this rupture by folding his language use back into a fannish framework:

“I am really satisfied. Thank you so much for putting on such a great show for us Japanese. I cried when I heard Aaron say “*kansha shite imasu*” [I’m grateful]. That’s what I should be saying to Aaron.”

“The fact that he used even more Japanese than I had expected made me very happy.”

“I was in heaven just with Aaron coming to Japan and singing for us...but I was really, really moved by his dedicated efforts to speak Japanese.”<sup>58</sup>

In the same way that fictional *dōjinshi* afford fans one means of cultivating a sense of affinity with stars through their merging of cultural differences in a potential space of perfect comprehensibility, 2.5-D offers fans a safe space for negotiating the divide between the imagined and the real. For some fans, this is enough. Having

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 69, 70.

symbolically ‘possessed’ the star, they can choose to continue playing until such a time as he loses meaning or interest, “not so much forgotten as relegated to limbo.”<sup>59</sup> Insofar as fandom proceeds from pleasure, this is as much as we can *expect* from such imaginative acts. Yet, it does not thus follow that nothing more can result from fan production and activity. As Winnicott argues, creativity involving the transitional object “gives room for the process of becoming able to accept difference and similarity.”<sup>60</sup> In the transcultural context, fan production similarly creates a space within which cultural differences may begin to be explored, ultimately leading to their acknowledgment and, sometimes, acceptance. What it cannot be expected to do, however, is compel this process.

### Between Worlds

In her overview of Hong Kong film and star fans, *Honkon chūdoku* (Hong Kong addicted), journalist Hara Tomoko describes a visit to Hong Kong by a Japanese fan of singer/actor Jacky Cheung:

August. Happily...M-siujie<sup>61</sup> was able to go to Hong Kong to see [Jacky] Cheung Hok-yau’s concert. This was her second visit to Hong Kong, following a quick stop there on a trip to China ten years earlier. She knew nothing of Hong Kong’s tourist spots or famous restaurants. What she did know was fannish places like the Causeway Bay office of the “Yau-yau Club”<sup>62</sup> and the Hong Kong Coliseum in Hung Hom.<sup>63</sup>

Like many fans of Hong Kong stars, M-siujie’s travel to Hong Kong falls under the aegis of *okkake* (lit. following), a fan practice that is typically translated as “star-

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<sup>59</sup> Winnicott, “Playing and Reality,” 7.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> “*Siujie*” is the Cantonese term for an unmarried woman; i.e., Miss.

<sup>62</sup> The Yau-yau Club [友友俱樂部] is Cheung’s official fan club in Hong Kong.

<sup>63</sup> Hara, *Honkon chūdoku*, 17-18.

chasing,” but which in fact encompasses activities ranging from “*roke*” (film location) pilgrimages to concert attendance to attempts to make actual contact with stars. In Japan, *okkake* of *enka*, Johnny’s, kabuki, or Takarazuka stars involves the mobilization of money and time, as well as information culled through official and unofficial channels. Prior to the late 1990s, when digital communications transformed the ways in which fans gathered and disseminated information, official fan clubs and unofficial ‘circles’ of fans were the primary means of circulating knowledge of a star’s activities and whereabouts, and *okkake* fans would frequently gather at a site – either rumored or established – where they might catch a glimpse of, get an autograph from, or give a gift to a star.<sup>64</sup>

Given its public locus, *okkake* fans arguably are the most visible members of Japanese fandoms, and their diversity – not only demographic but particularly in terms of behavior – has made them an easy target in the mass media. For the most part, Japanese fandoms are self-regulating, with fan hierarchies generally evolving out of behaviors, rather than demographics.<sup>65</sup> Within *okkake*, rules for proper deportment around stars often come from quasi-official quarters (fan clubs, commercial *okkake* publications, etc.), and they are generally aimed at attracting the least amount of negative attention from stars and their promoters.<sup>66</sup> Yet, given their informality, such

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<sup>64</sup> In the 1957 Joshua Logan melodrama, *Sayonara*, audiences are treated to a glimpse of historical Takarazuka-style *okkake* in a scene in which war bride Katsumi (Miyoshi Umeki) stands outside the dormitories of an all-female theatrical troupe with other fans hoping to approach star Hana-ogi (Taka Miiiko).

<sup>65</sup> Brau, “Rakugo Fans at Play,” 142; Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 164-166; Stevens, “Buying Intimacy,” 59-62.

<sup>66</sup> Rules for Johnny’s idol *okkake* (known as “*oriki*”), released by the “Johnny’s Research Society” [Johnny’s *kenkyūkai*] wing of publishing house Rokusaisha, included such proscriptions as “Don’t sit in the road while waiting to see a star,” “Don’t call or force your way into an idol’s house,” and “Don’t ride the same train as an idol” (*Johnny’s Maniacs* 7, 25). Rokusaisha, whose president was

rules are difficult to enforce and, as such, are both subject to abuse by overly enthusiastic fans and all but nonexistent to the uninitiated. As Jennifer Robertson observes of Takarazuka fandom, “the relationship between Takarazuka fans and actors has remained one of interdependency. From the time they are enrolled in the Music Academy, Takarasiennes indulge fans who wish to indulge them.”<sup>67</sup> It is this interdependence that accounts for the ambivalence of star-fan encounters, which take place in the space between the intense fan interest upon which stardom is predicated and stars’ claims to privacy.

From a Japanese fan cultural perspective, Hong Kong stars of the 1980s and 1990s were particularly well-suited to *okkake* practices. As discussed in Chapter Two, their star personae within Hong Kong were constructed in no small part through ties to local places and recognizable types (humble outlying islander, poor little rich boy, street urchin), and they were ubiquitous not only in the media, but also on the streets, in the shops, and, in particular, restaurants, of Hong Kong itself. For Japanese fans, whose interactions with domestic stars typically occur once-removed and through the intermediation of promoters and managers, the sheer visibility and physical presence of Hong Kong stars imbued them with an aura of approachability (*shinkinkan*) that aligned easily with *okkake* practices intended to foster fans’ sense of intimacy with stars.

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arrested in 2005 for defamation related to the pachinko gaming industry, is a long-time producer of *okkake*-centered books such as *Johnny’s gorudo mappu* (Johnny’s gold map) and *Takarazuka okkake mappu* (Takarazuka *okkake* map), the former of which became the impetus of a 1997 privacy lawsuit brought by, among others, Johnny’s Jimushō and individually named members of the boy-band SMAP against the publisher (see <http://www.translan.com/jucc/precedent-1997-06-23.html>). The ruling in this case blocked sales of the book, precipitating the mobilization of *okkake* in the publisher’s self-described fight for freedoms of speech and expression in Japan (*Takarazuka okkake mappu* 2003, 316-318).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 164.

Both transnational *okkake* and broader practices of film-related tourism were facilitated by the high value of the yen in the mid-1990s, which made travel to Hong Kong from Japan something that could be undertaken both casually and repeatedly, not to mention often more cheaply than domestic travel within Japan. The 1990s witnessed the rise of overseas “repeaters” (*ripītā*), whose resources of money and time allowed them to travel overseas repeatedly for not only sightseeing, but shopping, dining, and entertainment. Tourists’ increased familiarity with such sites of repeat travel in turn spurred tourist agencies to offer so-called ‘free’ tours that, at slightly higher cost than group tours (the low cost of which was subsidized in part by local retailers to whom busloads of tourists were shuttled), allowed repeaters to take advantage of group pricing for airfares and accommodations without any obligation to take part in organized tourist activities, thus freeing travelers to partake in their own, subjective tourism. In the case of Hong Kong, nearly half of all Japanese travelers were repeat visitors by 1997-8,<sup>68</sup> a number which grew to 53% by 2001.<sup>69</sup> While only 2.4% of Japanese arrivals surveyed in 2001 by the Hong Kong Tourist Association cited “entertainment” as their motivation for visiting,<sup>70</sup> an informal survey of fans conducted online in 2003 indicated that fully 21% of fans who had been to Hong Kong were repeaters, with one adding that, “it’s more like returning home than ‘going’.”<sup>71</sup>

The concomitant rise of Japanese fan interest in Hong Kong cinema and stars and changing Japanese tourism practices encouraged the media and tourist industries

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<sup>68</sup> Heung & Qu, “Japanese Tourists,” 67.

<sup>69</sup> *Kanjiru Honkon* (Hong Kong City of Life) White Paper, HKTA (2002), 24.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>71</sup> *Nihon ni okeru Honkon eiga kanshō* [Hong Kong Film Spectatorship in Japan], March 2003. <http://www.my3q.com/home/xilerui> (accessed April 2, 2003).

of Hong Kong and Japan alike to capitalize on these developments through tours and information specifically aimed at fans. At the high end, Prénom H's Yumcha Club sponsored no fewer than seven Hong Kong tours for members featuring film studio and shooting location tours, participation in the Hong Kong International Film Festival, and private parties with such stars as Chow Yun-fat, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Stephen Chow, and Leslie Cheung, as well as filmmakers Peter Chan, John Woo, and Shu Kei, and even legendarily iconoclastic cinematographer Christopher Doyle (fig. 27).<sup>72</sup> Tour companies similarly organized film-centered travel: as late as 2002, Kinki Nippon Tourist offered, in conjunction with Daiei Studio and the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA), a 3-day 2-night trip commemorating the release of the Fruit Chan film *Durian Durian* (2002). For ¥85,000(USD \$680), fans were afforded the opportunity to lunch and talk with the director himself, airfare and hotel inclusive.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 27:** Cinematographer Christopher Doyle toasting Japanese fans<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express*.

<sup>73</sup> *Eiga Dorian dorian kōkai kinen* [*Durian, Durian* Premiere Commemoration] tour flier.

<sup>74</sup> Shinohara, *Hong Kong Cinema Express*, 456.

Angelina Karpovich, by way of James Combs, notes that distinctions of ‘official’, ‘semi-official’, ‘unofficial’, and ‘counter-official’ film-related travel “allow...us to re-imagine the same continuum of relationship between the tourist and the site in terms of the degree of autonomy afforded to the visitors.”<sup>75</sup> Within this framework, such tours might be considered semi-official offerings distinct from the structured experiences offered by Hollywood studios, yet still retaining explicit links to the media industry.

Yet, in contrast with tourism to specific *sites* of film activity, such as “Hobbiton, the New Zealand *Lord of the Rings* location-turned-themepark [sic], [and] Portmeirion, the quirky Welsh hotel complex easily recognizable as the backdrop to the cult television series *The Prisoner*,”<sup>76</sup> these Hong Kong tours centered specifically on stars and, to a lesser extent, filmmakers whose willingness to meet with Japanese fans constituted a tacit acknowledgment of their own commodified position within the globalized market for Hong Kong cinema. Thus, here it is less the autonomy of the fan within the filmic space, per se, than the degree of commodification of the star-fan encounter that determines the ‘officiality’ of fan travel. In this sense, despite the physical presence of stars at dinner parties and even on movie sets, the formal, commodified context of the star-fan interaction ultimately detracts from what Hills terms the “cult ‘authenticity’”<sup>77</sup> prized by *okkake* fans.

More independent travelers were aided by a plethora of commercial guide books that featured information not only about film locations throughout Hong Kong, but also detailed information on the history of Hong Kong cinema, overviews of Hong

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<sup>75</sup> Karpovich, “Theoretical Approaches,” 15.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Hills, *Fan Cultures*, 149.



Kong stars, and how-to guides for cinema and concert-going (fig. 28).<sup>78</sup> The HKTA contributed to the wealth of material available to Japanese fans of Hong Kong film and



Figure 28: “Movie Location & Star Shop Map,” Japan Tourist Bureau (JTB)<sup>79</sup>

stars with the publication of its own Japanese language “Let’s visit [film] locations: Hong Kong Cinema Map,” including invitations and exhortations to visit Hong Kong from such stars as Nicholas Tse, Ekin Cheng, Sam Lee, and filmmakers Stanley Kwan and Jingle Ma, as well as featuring a welcome to Japanese fans from HKTA spokesman, Jackie Chan (fig. 29). Such publications, like the organized tours above, provided fans with

<sup>78</sup> *Honkon kojinyokō manyuaru* (Hong Kong manual for individuals, 1997); *Honkon omoroshiro shitei fukkatsu!* (Hong Kong Rebirth of the Interesting City!, 2000); *Kojinyokō Honkon Makau* (Individual Trips in Hong Kong & Macau, 2001); *Wagamama aruki Honkon Makau* (Self-Indulgent Walks in Hong Kong and Macau, 2002); *World Guide Honkon Makau* (World Guide Hong Kong/Macau, 2002).

<sup>79</sup> *World Guide Honkon/Makau '02-'03* (World Guide Hong Kong/Macau) (Tokyo: Japan Tourist Bureau, 2002), 104-5.



**Figure 29:** Jackie Chan welcoming Japanese visitors to cinematic Hong Kong on behalf of the HKTA<sup>80</sup>

a structured layout of Hong Kong’s cinematic geography; here, however, fans’ acts of seeking out such sites depended equally on their own affective investment in those particular films/locations as on information about them.

Nick Couldry has observed that, in the context of British television tourism, fans “use...words such as *actual* and *actually*, marking off things in the media world as unusual, out of the ordinary, and therefore of automatic significance.”<sup>81</sup> Their pleasure from visiting television sets and film locations, he argues, comes partly from the “*transposition* of the ‘ordinary’ into an extraordinary, ‘media’ context that is being marked in language. ‘Just’ ‘being there’ is itself extraordinary.”<sup>82</sup> More than this,

<sup>80</sup> Hong Kong Tourist Association, “Roke-chi o tazuneyō Honkon eiga mappu” (Let’s visit [film] locations Hong Kong Cinema Map),” 2001.

<sup>81</sup> Couldry, *The Place of Media Power*, 105.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

however, it is the transgression of the invisible boundaries demarcating ordinary and media worlds upon which fans' "fun clearly depend[s]."<sup>83</sup> The value placed on the 'real' in the *okkake* context is reflected in a recollection of fan Hosoda Seiko of her visit to Yau Ma Tei district, during her first visit to Hong Kong: "In the evening, I went to Temple Street and Man Street. I say 'went', but my hotel was close to Temple Street. This is where Ekin [Cheng]'s *Mean Street Story* and Anita [Yuen]'s *C'est La Vie, Mon Cherie* were set. I even discovered Tin Hau Temple! This is where Ekin and Chingmy make their vows. Yes. [It was] moving (*kandō*)."<sup>84</sup> Here, both the film scenes and her physical presence at the site where they were shot provoke the fan's emotional reaction. Like Couldry's *Coronation Street* fans, Hosoda's experience of the media space of mundane Yau Ma Tei is "marked off from 'the ordinary'"<sup>85</sup> and imbued with subjective significance. The site becomes a conduit of trans-temporal and spatial exchange between fan and star, in which, to borrow from Jackie Stacey's account of fan identification with Hollywood stars of the studio era, the "fixity of difference [between fans and stars] is open to temporary fluidity."<sup>86</sup>

From a fannish perspective, the feelings of intimacy evoked in the spatio-temporal blurring of star/fan differences represent the fulfillment of fan desires towards commodified personae. As one woman writes of her visit to the Jackie Chan-owned restaurant, Fisherman's Wharf,

Hearing from a waiter that Jackie hadn't been in recently, I had no hopes of seeing him, and thinking how nice it would be if I did meet him I sat down to dine with a friend. I don't remember anything that was on the menu, but

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>84</sup> Hosoda, *Yume miru Honkon*, 115.

<sup>85</sup> Couldry, *Media Rituals*, 62.

<sup>86</sup> Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 126.

everything was delicious!! As we were enjoying our meal, the waiter came over to us and said, “Jackie will be arriving soon”!!!!!!! I suddenly became nervous and couldn’t calm down!! After about 30 minutes like this, Jackie came in!!!! I was completely captivated, and even my friend, who isn’t a Jackie fan, said excitedly, “It’s the real Jackie Chan!!” We talked about how we didn’t think he’d come back out for a couple of hours, but after an hour Jackie emerged!! A fellow Jackie fan and I didn’t know how to approach him, but our non-Jackie fan went up to him out of nowhere and called out “Hi Jackie!!” Then we went over to where he was. Lacking time, we couldn’t get his autograph, but he took pictures with each of the three of us!! Awash in emotion, we left the restaurant to find it thundering and pouring down rain. Thanks to having met Jackie, I – who usually hate thunder, thought nothing of it...I never dreamed I’d have such happiness on my first day [in Hong Kong].<sup>87</sup>

Here, it is not a spatial but interpersonal hierarchy that structures these fans’ encounter with Chan, signified through the various details of his arrival and presence – not only through the whispered announcement of his imminent arrival and subsequent disappearance into an inner sanctum, but especially in the fan’s experience of Chan’s own timetable and the act of being returned unceremoniously into the rainy Hong Kong streets upon completion of the sublime experience. Yet, even here, the affectively charged experience of meeting the ‘real’ Chan in person not only overshadows the untimely downpour, but also imbues it with special significance.

Indeed, it is in the mundanity of star encounters that *okkake* fans locate the authenticity of their experiences. In a description of Dave Wong at Xinye Restaurant, one fan marks his everyday demeanor through descriptions of clothing (“casual denim shirt...and light brown suede shoes”) and choice of cigarettes and beer (“British Blue Girl”),<sup>88</sup> situating herself in relation to him with the understated observation that “he was sitting in an aisle seat, so he wound up being visible from anywhere in the

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<sup>87</sup> Kaleidoscope Eye, et.al, *Honkon myōjō ashiato meguri gurume tabi* (Gourmet trips following in the footsteps of Hong Kong stars) (2002), 20.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

restaurant. From where I was sitting I could look Dave Wong right in the face, making it a good vantage point even if it wasn't my intention to look at him."<sup>89</sup> The same fan spots retired star Brigitte Lin lunching at the Tiffin Lounge of the Grand Hyatt Hotel, likening her choice of "chiffon stole and elegant accessories" to the style of the two anonymous friends with whom she dines. Not ordinary in the literal sense, this fan characterizes the group as emblematic of a certain strata of wealthy "Hong Kong matrons,"<sup>90</sup> fixing them within the everyday habitus of Hong Kong life.

Such sightings appear, at first glance, to offer fans a glimpse of 'real' stars outside the inauthentic contexts of not only stage and screen, but also mediated star-centered tours. Yet, critical to the public circulation of stars is their cognizance of their own star personae; simply put, their ordinariness within the Hong Kong urban milieu is performed as much as any stage or screen role, and, for *okkake* fans, reaffirming the congruence of 'real' and star personae is a pleasure in itself. In a description of an encounter with Jacky Cheung at the same Grand Hyatt Hotel, the star's everydayness is signified both through clothing and demeanor in such a way that his fan-friendly persona is reaffirmed:

One time when I was enjoying afternoon tea, Jacky Cheung and a male friend came in and sat down two tables away. Since he seemed to be deep in conversation with his friend, he didn't eat but only drank tea. He was dressed down in sneakers and a dungaree shirt so I knew it was him right away, but I noticed that he was much thinner than I had thought. As I was leaving I spoke to him, and he patiently listened to my terrible English and responded kindly. He absolutely didn't try to rush me away, but spent some time with me. In the end, I was able to get a picture of the two of us. My impression was that he was relaxed and I thought "He's a real adult." I left Hong Kong fully feeling the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 90.

truth of the ‘Nice Guy Jacky Cheung’ legend.<sup>91</sup>

In contrast with the previous narrative of one fan’s encounter with Jackie Chan, in which a firm hierarchy between star and fan is maintained in part through the importance placed on Chan’s own schedule and relative lack of time for fan engagement, this fan makes note of Cheung’s willingness to speak with her without apparent regard to his own schedule. In this way, Cheung’s performance of public stardom underscores his authentically approachable persona, not only giving the fan pleasure but assuring her continued patronage.

Deviation from public personae also contributes to fans’ pleasure. Witnessing Leslie Cheung at the Queen’s Café restaurant – a site already marked as a media space for its appearance in the Wong Kar-wai film *Days of Being Wild* – this same fan notes, “I’ve met Leslie many times before, but [here] I saw him uncharacteristically eating cheesecake.”<sup>92</sup> Underlying her seemingly straightforward observation is a claim to intimacy with Cheung based on the fan’s own recognition of his deviation from normal patterns of behavior, which itself proceeds from the implicit intimacy born of multiple encounters with the star. This small act of witnessing Cheung eating cheesecake, contrasted with previous encounters, offers the individual *okkake* fan a private, and thus intimate, glimpse of the ‘real’, unmediated Cheung.

Yet, as Karpovich observes in the context of media tourism, “every instance of physical proximity brings with it a potential demystification and disavowal,” a “potential disappointment”<sup>93</sup> lurking just behind every façade. In contrast with the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>93</sup> Karpovich, “Theoretical Approaches,” 16.

contained world of fan production, the intimacy evoked through practices of *okkake* are, by definition, predicated on fans' flirtation with the tantalizing possibility of glimpsing candid expressions of a star's authentic self. Yet, straying too far from the public star persona constitutes a point of potential dissonance. Observing Leslie Cheung his café, Wei Nin Zhong Qing,<sup>94</sup> yet another *okkake* fan must draw on Cheung's mediated public persona to reconcile the individual she sees before eyes with the star she loves:

It was September 8, Leslie Cheung's birthday. I had come to Leslie's restaurant, Wei Nin Zhong Qing, to dine, and as I entered to the left, inside the door I saw Leslie and three friends sitting directly before me. Leslie's partner, Mr. Tong, was not there. Leslie was having fried rice and black tea. Perhaps because he wasn't very hungry, I remember he was moving the rice around his plate. The thing I remember most, though, was that he was sitting directly under the air-conditioner...wearing short sleeves, short pants, and sandals, looking very cold. Often when I had seen him before, he had a napkin folded into a triangle resting on his knees, but I can't forget that this time he had opened the napkin completely and had it wrapped around his legs. And I was surprised to see that, perhaps because of the cold, he was hunched over his plate, absently eating his fried rice. I suppose in one sense I was lucky to catch him in a way you don't normally see him... I knew from the morning newspaper that he had been filming several brawling scenes for *Moonlight Express* that day. So maybe he was just unusually tired? Or perhaps it was because the most important person wasn't there at the end of the day?<sup>95</sup>

This fan's investment in a particular 'real' Cheung persona finds expression in the ways that she attempts to make sense of his comparatively strange behavior here. The Cheung of this encounter embodies a quotidian ordinariness that exceeds the performance of 'life-sized' stardom; significantly, this fan attempts to account for this through a discursive return to precisely this everyday stardom, reading his apparent dejection in a *yaoi*-infused romanticization of Cheung's relationship with Daffy Tong,

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<sup>94</sup> Wei Nin Zhong Qing was eventually sold to Queen's Café, a Russian restaurant located in Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island, which opened branches throughout Hong Kong in the 2000s.

<sup>95</sup> Kaleidoscope Eye, et.al., *Honkon myōjō*, 86-7.

his long-term partner. The narrative of heartbreak she creates affords her the pleasure of imagining that her intimate knowledge of the stars' private life may be able to account for his otherwise inexplicable manner.

As in the production and consumption of *dōjinshi*, the primary motivation of *okkake* is the subjective experience of intimacy with stars. While based on an actual experience of the star, whether in concert, through arranged tours, or, in particular, in random encounters in the everyday context of Hong Kong life, the ways in which fans derive a sense of intimacy with stars rely as much on imaginative practice as empirical experience, the two commingling in the potential space existing between reality and fantasy. As I have discussed above, the ways in which both Hong Kong cinema and its stars inhabit the physical Hong Kong make it an ideal locus for *okkake* activity, fostering not only an imagined, but the appearance of a 'real' intimacy with Hong Kong stars. In this sense, practices of *okkake* contribute to and reinforce a subjective understanding of Hong Kong as much as more explicitly imaginative fan production. Yet, the empirical reality of Hong Kong as a geographical, social, and political entity means that it equally holds the potential to alter the ways in which fans understand and interact with the place and its ordinary inhabitants.

### **Your Place is My Place is Whose Place?**

In the introduction to his work on the increased globalization of populations, communications, and culture, John Tomlinson observes that the experience of globalization of the transnationally mobile business class is such that it “*minimize[s]* cultural difference so as to allow the ‘universal’ practices of the international business



culture to function smoothly.”<sup>96</sup> The sites of transnational business activity – airplanes and airports, hotels, boardrooms – as well as the “facilities – faxes, CNN business news, international cuisine”<sup>97</sup> – all combine in what Tomlinson calls a “*functional* proximity...[that] create[s] globalized spaces and connecting corridors which ease the flow of capital (including its commodities and personnel) by matching the time-space compression of connectivity with a degree of cultural ‘compression’.”<sup>98</sup> The Euro-centricity of Tomlinson’s argument aside, the Japanese experience of Hong Kong throughout the last thirty years has closely mirrored what he describes: a business class comprised primarily of men who both travel to and, to a lesser extent, live in Hong Kong, primarily for the purpose of promoting and supporting Japanese corporate interests overseas. In contrast with the ‘universal’ Western bent of Tomlinson’s description, this Japanese business class functions smoothly not (only) through the relative homogeneity of places and facilities, but also through sites coded as Japanese: corporate offices staffed in large part by Japanese employees, Japanese restaurants frequented by expatriate ‘salarymen’, and Japanese hotels catering, in particular, to a Japanese clientele. Here, the illusion of cultural proximity gives way to a myth of national difference that reinforces Japanese discourses of cultural uniqueness.

Yet, there is another class of Japanese traveler whose experiences more closely align with those of Tomlinson’s observation. Since the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, Hong Kong was perceived by female travelers as an ideal site for the

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<sup>96</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 7. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. Author’s emphasis.

consumption of Western brand goods and ‘international’ cuisines. The abovementioned inexpensiveness of travel to Hong Kong combined with the comparatively low price of European luxury goods and clothing (relative to Japan)<sup>99</sup> to provide a powerful incentive for Japanese women to come to Hong Kong to shop. The opening of a new, modern airport on the outlying island of Chek Lap Kok in 1998, replacing the old, and distinctly more ‘local’ Kaitak Airport in Kowloon, as well as a wealth of aesthetically standardized hotels and Western-styled indoor shopping centers and boutiques contributed to women’s seamless navigation of Hong Kong.

Unsurprisingly, it is this class of transnational female consumer that has characterized Japanese travel to Hong Kong throughout the last twenty years. Yet, as Tomlinson observes, there are other, “less well-organized or resourced travelers”<sup>100</sup> who equally comprise the ranks of the transnationally mobile. As he describes,

In the global space of the terminal such people may appear less accomplished in the rituals of arrival, but their lack of resources means that they quickly penetrate deeper into the culture of locality: the bus rather than the taxi, a basic hotel in a working-class neighborhood lacking the cultural ‘insulation’ provided by five-star status, the need to shop in cheap local stores. These travelers quickly become more accomplished hermeneuticians, testing out the real extents of cultural proximity outside of the enclaves of a global business culture. The journey into localities then is a journey into the challenging reality of cultural difference, posing the question of how far connectivity establishes ‘proximity’ beyond the technological modality of increasing access.<sup>101</sup>

As exemplars of such independent transnational travelers, Japanese *okkake* fans were particularly well-positioned to “test...out the real extents of cultural proximity,” which, in the context of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, occurred as much in

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<sup>99</sup> Lawrence, “Efficient or Exclusionist?,” 325-326.

<sup>100</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

fans' localized experiences of Hong Kong and its people as in acts of film and star-based textual reading and fan production.

In particular, the repetitious nature of *okkake* exposed fans to experiences of Hong Kong that, while not necessarily 'authentic' in the sociopolitical sense, nonetheless exceeded a tourist orientation. Among Hong Kong's denizens, the sheer frequency with which commercial establishments and geographical landmarks change and even disappear is a common refrain of daily life. Such mundane experiences of the physical Hong Kong were reflected in the restaurant listings of the 2002 146-page fan-produced *okkake* book, *Honkon myōjō ashiato meguri gurume tabi: Honkon myōjō ni aieru mise, oishī mise gaido* (Gourmet trips following in the footsteps of Hong Kong stars: A guide to good restaurants and shops where you can meet stars). A description of the well-known noodle shop Kau Kee Restaurant includes the observation that, in addition to boasting a clientele of stars that includes Leslie Cheung, Chow Yun-fat, and Tony Leung Chiu-wai (who, it is noted, has been witnessed there eating a bowl of noodles at 2:30 in the afternoon by himself, seated at a table across from a regular patron), filming for the 1999 Leslie Cheung film *The Kid* took place on an outdoor stairway immediately facing the restaurant. However, the authors warn, "recently several small Western restaurants have sprung up halfway up the staircase, and so the view is quite different from that in [the movie]. If you want to experience the hill the way it was during filming, you should get there soon."<sup>102</sup>

Similarly, Orphee Restaurant in Kowloon's Tsim Sha Tsui, identified as the site of the premiere party for Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and featuring an

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<sup>102</sup> Kaleidoscope Eye, et.al., *Honkon myōjō*, 6.

“In the Mood for Love set menu,” is also described as an endangered site, with readers being cautioned that “Western restaurants don’t do well in Hong Kong, so if you want to follow in these footsteps we recommend you get there soon.”<sup>103</sup> Would-be visitors to Lan Kwai Fong’s California Restaurant, featured in a number of commercial publications as a signature shooting location for Wong’s *Chungking Express*, are cautioned that the restaurant was renovated following film production and now no longer looks the same as in the movie.<sup>104</sup> From the perspective of the *okkake* visitor, these observations serve as a warning of that “potential disappointment”<sup>105</sup> that is the flip-side of greater intimacy with, in this case, the geographical habitus of Hong Kong cinema. At the same time, in contrast with the sacred sites of media pilgrimage, in which immutability guarantees a transcendent experience of (rarified) media space, such sites become part of a living Hong Kong that Japanese *okkake* fans begin themselves to experience in their pursuit of stars.

Indeed, one way that practices of *okkake* exceed the “cultural ‘insulation’” of a certain class of transnational mobility is in fans’ use of everyday modes of transportation in Hong Kong to seek out and experience star and cinema-related sites whose literal and popular cultural peripherality situates them outside the aegis of the ‘designated’ attractions of film tourist maps. The directions given in the abovementioned *okkake* guidebook to some establishments reflect a detailed-bordering-on-arcane knowledge of local geography and public transportation options: fans hoping to catch a glimpse of Leon Lai at Ming City Seafood Restaurant are

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 89. As predicted, Orphee has since closed.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>105</sup> Karpovich, “Theoretical Approaches,” 16.

directed either to walk 20 minutes from the B exit of Lok Fu Station on the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), or, for the more adventurous, to catch a Kowloon City-bound bus outside either Mongkok or Tsim Sha Tsui MTR stations, alight in front of the Old Kaitak Airport, and walk eight minutes. Particularly dedicated fans of Ekin Cheng may seek out Honeymoon Dessert, where he once worked as a youth, by taking the 1A minibus, located directly to the right of the B exit of Choi Hung Station, or Kowloon Motor Bus (KMB) 92 to the next-to-last stop in remote Sai Kung Peninsula (fig. 30).

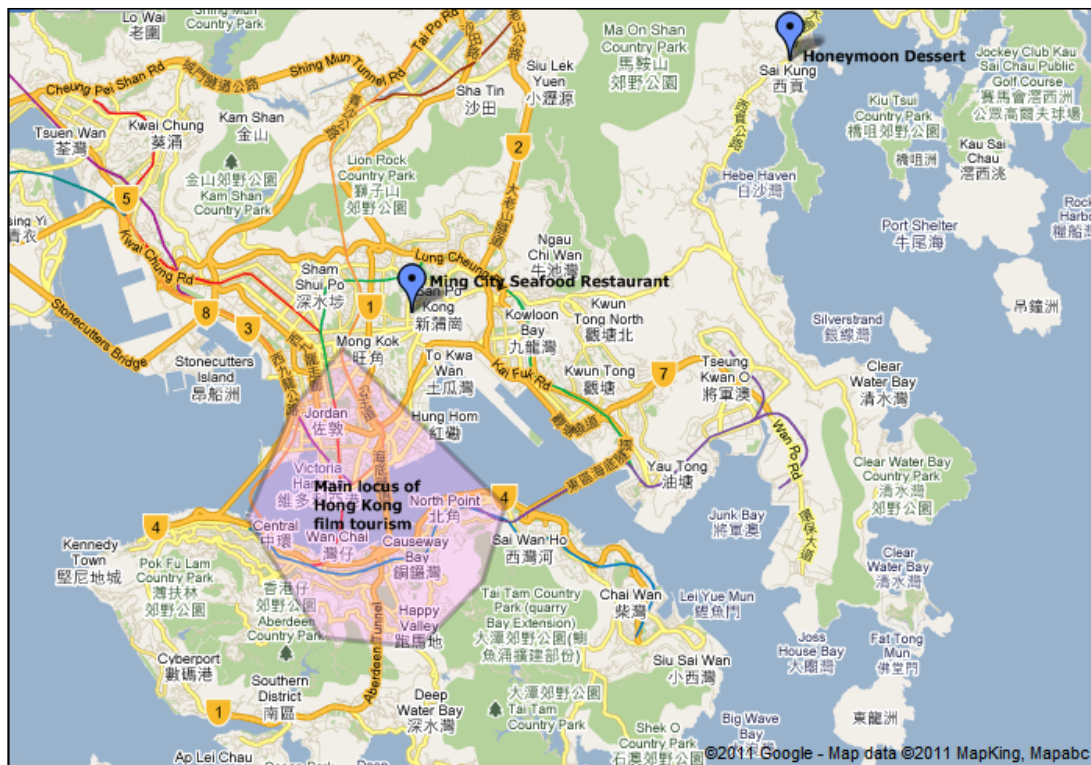


Figure 30: Ming City Seafood Restaurant and Honeymoon Dessert relative to the main locus of Hong Kong film tourism.

Such details seem, at first glance, to be little more than the ancillary minutiae of fannish experience – the means to an arguably trivial end. Yet, such critique overlooks the transcultural knowledge and local mobility from which they come. While certain

modes of public transportation in Hong Kong are tourist-friendly, the use by *okkake* fans of public buses (and, in particular, mini-buses which frequently lack designated stops) and even taxicabs requires, if not first-hand geographical knowledge, the ability to communicate effectively one's desired destination. Presumably not all such excursions end in success, but the act of *okkake* in the transnational context necessarily affords fans a more intimate knowledge of both Hong Kong and its (popular) culture than that of the culturally insulated transnational traveler.

Within the literature on transcultural fandoms, fans' self-reflexivity about their own national cultural position constitutes one marker of their critical engagement with the originating culture of the media they consume, what Henry Jenkins describes as "the beginnings of a global perspective, and the awareness of alternative vantage points."<sup>106</sup> Frequently, this self-reflexivity is transnational in orientation, foregrounding the ways in which distinct nation-states have interacted with one another and performed on the regional and global stage; as Iwabuchi notes of the Japanese female fans he interviews, "exposure to Hong Kong popular culture has encouraged some of these women to become more critically aware of Japan's experience of modernity and its imperialist history. A self-reflexive praxis thus marks their appreciation of Hong Kong's distinctive cultural modernity."<sup>107</sup> In the context of *okkake* fans of Hong Kong stars, the familiarity they acquire through acts of 'star-chasing' fosters a sense self-reflexivity that is similarly attuned to their 'Japaneseness' within the Hong Kong context, albeit to somewhat less apparently progressive ends than observed by Iwabuchi. In a description within the *okkake* restaurant guidebook

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<sup>106</sup> Jenkins, "Pop Cosmopolitanism," 130.

<sup>107</sup> Iwabuchi, "Nostalgia," 565.

of the centrally located Sun Dau Kee Seafood Restaurant, where one might have, in a former time, hoped to encounter Anita Mui or Leslie Cheung, the authors include a detailed discussion of “Japanese pricing” (*Nihonjin nedan*) at the restaurant, noting that “word has it that prices on the menu for Japanese people are nearly three times those of locals.” Nevertheless, it continues, “it’s extremely rare for such an ordinary place to still have Japanese pricing in place.”<sup>108</sup> In contrast with Japanese mass media reportage of rumored race-based price gouging in Hong Kong, which contributed to broader anti-Chinese discourses in right-leaning tabloids,<sup>109</sup> the authors offer several material reasons why this restaurant might still engage in such practices: because it is situated close to a number of hotels catering to tourists unlikely to return multiple times to Hong Kong; because transient visitors such as backpackers are unaware of price discrepancies and willing pay whatever the bill says; or because it was done this way in the past, when “stupid Japanese tourists”<sup>110</sup> were overcharged on a regular basis.

In place of warnings about the dangers of such establishments or generalizations about Hong Kong business practices, the authors instead offer tactics designed to ensure that a fair price is paid for a meal, urging Japanese patrons to keep track of what they ate in case the need to dispute a charge arises and noting, as a matter of opinion, that it seems that the practice is more an informal one of waitstaff inflating orders than an institutionalized one occurring at the point of billing. Readers are informed that they can help keep prices down by avoiding dishes priced at the

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<sup>108</sup> Kaleidoscope Eye, et.al., *Honkon myōjō*, 17-18.

<sup>109</sup> *Aera*, “Honkon no hoteru, ‘jinruibetsu ryōkin’ no fushigi: Nihonjin kankōkyaku wa kamo desu ka?” (November 17, 1997) 10; Peter Segal, “For Hong Kong’s Tourism Industry, More is Not Better,” *New York Times* (October 28, 1998); Jonathan Manthorpe, “Japanese Say Hong Kong Bilking Tourists,” *Hamilton Spectator* (October 15, 1997) B4.

<sup>110</sup> Kaleidoscope Eye, et.al., *Honkon myōjō*, 17-18.

market value, and they are provided with a brief explanation of how market value for seafood is determined, with the caveat that, since traditional Chinese measures are commonly used in restaurant instead of metric grams, Japanese people are at an inherent disadvantage in trying to game the system. Neither especially sensitive to Hong Kong's sociopolitical context and Japan's imperialist past in the territory, nor superficially touristic, this passage reflects an ambivalent engagement with Hong Kong that is grounded in a degree of awareness of both its everyday patterns and fans' own liminal position within them. Its knowledges are the mundane politics of cross-cultural communication, motivated by fandom but exceeding it in the intersection of national identities and cultures.

Not only cross cultural differences, but intra-cultural distinctions constitute fans' self-reflexive awakening. As Chie Sakai observes in the context of Japanese women who relocated to Hong Kong in the 1990s for the purposes of employment, "After their experiences in Hong Kong, Japan is no longer seen as a homogenous and unproblematic category in the way that it used to be for these interviewees. They started to recognize that the Japanese differ from one another in terms of gender, position in the workplace, class, future intentions for staying in Hong Kong, and so on."<sup>111</sup> Such a perspective is reflected not only in the above observation of "stupid Japanese tourists," from whom the authors clearly distinguish themselves, but also in equally distanced descriptions of resident Japanese patrons of Hong Kong restaurants. A listing for Katiga Japanese Food Shop notes that "Japanese people [including resident Japanese salarymen] don't know this place, but it's famous among Hong

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<sup>111</sup> Sakai, "The Japanese Community in Hong Kong," E-book.



Kongers.”<sup>112</sup> Similarly, in another listing for Yik Sang Restaurant, fan editor Kaleidoscope Eye notes that “since it gets good reviews, there are a lot of locals and few Japanese tourists who come here,”<sup>113</sup> both observations implicitly aligning the fans with local, rather than ‘Japanese’, restaurant patrons in their insider knowledge both of the restaurants and, in particular, their star patrons. In this way, a localized sense of intimacy between fans and Hong Kongers themselves is established, reinforcing fans’ ‘insider’ subjectivity along lines of coterminous popular and national cultures.

To this point, I have indicated several of the ways in which practices of *okkake* contribute to the blurring of boundaries separating fans from stars, and Japanese from Chinese, while at the same time fostering discrete identities that inhabit a no-longer monolithic “Japanese” national identity. Such effects of the transnational mobility of Japanese female fans of Hong Kong cinema suggest Tomlinson’s “independent”<sup>114</sup> traveler, whose negotiations of local difference free her from the insulating force of the “non-places”<sup>115</sup> of the transnational business class. It is tempting, in this sense, to situate these fans’ affective investment in Hong Kong stars and, by extension, Hong Kong itself as qualitatively superior to the comparatively inauthentic experiences of that class. And yet, as Tomlinson, by way of Marc Augé, writes of the “deterritorialization”<sup>116</sup> of locality and, in particular, the role of the ‘non-place’ within it, “[this] concept...has to be able to grasp the novelty of the contemporary

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>114</sup> Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture*, 8.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 108-9.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 107-8.

transformation of place – its positive as well as negative features – without yielding to the temptation to read this as simply the impoverishment or, indeed, the dissolution of cultural interaction.”<sup>117</sup> In the same way, it is equally imperative that we avoid the easy equation of experiences grounded in a more intensified experience of the transcultural local with a necessarily or uniformly socio-politically progressive stance. Within Tomlinson’s brief characterization of the ‘independent’ traveler is the critical observation that what is afforded by their comparatively deep penetration of local cultures is the potential to interrogate the *limits* of imagined proximity and empirical difference. It is in this sense that we may begin to understand the broader structural factors that yet constrain fans’ sense of intimacy and nascent belonging within the Hong Kong popular cultural milieu.

Higashi Naofumi observes that, for some fans, star fandom is eventually supplanted by a passion for Hong Kong itself, observing that “rather than specifically pursuing [stars], they seem to be in love with Hong Kong itself.”<sup>118</sup> It is the emergence of such an attitude that characterizes Hosoda’s musings about Hong Kong as her return to Japan looms imminent, in which the affinities she feels for Hong Kong stars are transferred to the Hong Kong cultural context. Woven through her star and cinema-centered narrative are asides and observations about Hong Kong people, customs, and language that emphasize points of affinity with her own national cultural habitus: originally hailing from western Japan, Hosoda favorably observes that the demeanor of Hong Kong people is not unlike that of Osakans: “What I thought

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>118</sup> Fujinami, et.al., *Den’ei toshi Honkon*, 227.

was interesting was that the people of Hong Kong and the people of Osaka (Kansai?)<sup>119</sup> are the same (even though it's probably a coincidence). Aren't their characters similar? I guess it's generally understood, but I kind of think it as well. The commercial spirit of Hong Kongers and that of Osakans. Their friendliness. Their bargaining. That kind of thing."<sup>120</sup> Hosoda also finds affinities between spoken Cantonese and Japanese, noting that, "as a result, it's a language that's friendly to Japanese. Don't you think so?"<sup>121</sup>

In one sense, Hosoda's observations reflect a blurring of national cultural boundaries through which she comes to inhabit that 'borderlessness' (*mukokuseki*) celebrated in mass media profiles of such stars as Japanese-Taiwanese Takeshi Kaneshiro. Yet, the integrity of this borderless state is contingent on its conformity with the fan's cinema-centered expectations and desires, as revealed in moments of disjuncture between expectation and reality, as when she notes the "unease" (*iwakan*) of hearing English being spoken between "Mongoloids."<sup>122</sup> Subsequently, she describes an encounter with two Indian men that seems to result in an unanticipated moment of self-reflection:

I don't know how to explain it, but something that happened in the elevator was shocking. I was riding with two men who appeared to be from India. They good-naturedly spoke to me, asking things like "Chinese?" and when I answered "Yes" to the question, "Japanese?" they said, "Good." They said, "Good, good." At first, I wondered if they were making fun of me (and they might have been), but then I began to think that they really mean it was a good thing. As if the fact of my being Japanese was a wonderful thing (really, I think it isn't a good thing at all). And it struck me as strange that an Indian man

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<sup>119</sup> "Kansai" refers to a large swath of western Japan that encompasses Osaka, Nara, Kyoto, Wakayama, Hyogo, and Shiga prefectures.

<sup>120</sup> Hosoda, *Yume miru Honkon*, 166.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

could think that just being Japanese was “good.” The Indian man made me think about my being Japanese (ha, ha)...(for the record, this book is definitely not some social science text about rethinking what it means to be Japanese.)<sup>123</sup>

Her observation here appears to reflect the self-reflexivity of the *okkake* fans described above, but it is circumscribed by an earlier description of the non-Chinese, non-Western Hong Kong locals standing outside Chungking Mansions, in which she notes, “My Cantonese class was in the afternoon, so in the morning I went to Tsim Sha Tsui. When I left the station, th-ther-ere was Chungking House (from *Chungking Express*)! It was quite an impressive building. But lots of Indians and others were hanging out there, giving it a suspicious-looking (*ayashige*) atmosphere.”<sup>124</sup> Here, the pan-Asian contiguousness of Hosoda’s experience of Hong Kong is disrupted by the reality of its multicultural and, in particular, multiethnic composition, implicitly revealing the racial and ethnic contours of her fandom. In one sense, the latent xenophobia of Hosoda’s statement belongs to her and, by extension, Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars. At the same time, it is important to note that the *ayashige* atmosphere of the Chungking Mansions of Hosoda’s observation closely mirrors that of Wong Kar-wai’s deployment of it in *Chungking Express*, which is to say, in essence, what goes around comes around. If the pan-Asian affect of Japanese women’s fandom of Hong Kong cinema is disrupted by the physical presence of non-Chinese Hong Kongers, I would argue that this is as much a product of Hong Kong cinema itself as of fans’ own socio-cultural habitus.

Although not representative by any means, some fans ultimately relocate to Hong Kong altogether, the trajectory of their engagement with both the place and the

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 110.

people foregrounding its everyday locus. Accounts of two such fans in the books *Honkon de OL shiyō!* (Let's be O[ffice]L[adies] in Hong Kong!) and the *Kinema Junpō*-published *Honkon de hataraku josei no tame no gaidobukku* (A guidebook for women who work in Hong Kong) mirror each other to the extent that they constitute something of a microcosm of fans' experiences as immigrants to Hong Kong. Both fans of Jackie Chan, 27-year-old Ozawa Naoko and 30-year-old Yamaguchi Yumi each travel to Hong Kong for the purpose of *okkake* and local film-going, Ozawa going so far as to obtain a "two-shot" of herself with Chan.<sup>125</sup> Where Ozawa is initially unmoved by the physical Hong Kong, having never even opened a tourist guidebook about it, the territory appeals to Yamaguchi from her first glimpse of it on a stopover on the way to Europe:

We only had a few hours for some sightseeing. [But] even then I thought what a nice place it would be to live. In particular, I was drawn to the disorderliness of Hong Kong. Even though men were squatting half-naked on the ground and women slouched as they walked, it seemed like a place where no one would tell them not to do that...I thought how great that kind of place would be.<sup>126</sup>

Both eventually engage in Cantonese language learning: for Yamaguchi, Cantonese is a means to the hoped-for end of finding employment in Hong Kong. Ozawa, having since turned her fannish attention to Andy Lau, sees the language as one facet of her growing fandom. Ultimately, Ozawa signs up for a month-long Cantonese course in Hong Kong, quitting her job in Japan since she knows she will never be able to take a month's leave of absence.

Thus arrived in Hong Kong, she quickly comes to realize that she wants to live there by any means possible, finding work through an employment agency at a local

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<sup>125</sup> Sasahara, *Honkon de OL shiyō!*, 71.

<sup>126</sup> Yahiro, *Honkon de hataraku josei*, 45.

Japanese restaurant. Similarly, Yamaguchi makes the decision to search for work in Hong Kong following a month's stay with a Hong Kong-based friend, also finding work at a Japanese restaurant through an employment agency. Both sign 2-year contracts, and each quits within the space of the first year. In her research of Japanese female immigrants to Hong Kong, Sakai observes the difficulty of managing expectations of a less constrictive Hong Kong with the realities of working in Japanese-owned businesses, quoting one woman who states, "Japanese society in Hong Kong is very male-dominated. After going overseas, their demands for Japanese women have become more conservative. I thought that I could give my opinion more openly in Hong Kong, but in reality I cannot. I could speak, but no one hears me."<sup>127</sup> Along these same lines, as Ozawa complains of her employment in a Japanese restaurant, "even though I was here in Hong Kong, [I was surrounded] completely by Japanese society. I had come with the dream of being in this city Hong Kong, but where I lived was nothing less than Japan. I became fed up with the interpersonal conflicts and felt that there was no reason for me to be here in Hong Kong."<sup>128</sup>

Seeking experiences outside the Japanese enclave of Hong Kong, Ozawa and Yamaguchi both find work in local companies: Ozawa as the secretary of the Malaysian president of a small business, and Yamaguchi in the office of a local import-export firm. In contrast with the overly familiar interpersonal challenges of working within largely Japanese settings, here the women confront challenges based on differences that play out in ethnic terms. Yamaguchi's job is ultimately terminated at the hands of her boss's ethnic Chinese Indonesian wife, with whom she has several

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<sup>127</sup> Rie Ishida, quoted in Sakai, "The Japanese Community," E-book.

<sup>128</sup> Sasahara, *Honkon de OL shiyō!*, 106.

confrontations over work, while Ozawa finds herself with nothing to do, as all of the secretarial work in her office is done by her boss's Chinese girlfriend. Ultimately both women land in Hong Kong-based Japanese companies. For Yamaguchi, her job making copies and performing other such administrative tasks is a means to an end. As she explains, "I've been tired of life here before. At such times I ask myself why I stay. In the end, it's because I can do my own thing here. If I want to go right, I go right. If I decide next to go left, I can turn around and go left. And there's absolutely nobody who will criticize me for it. That's the kind of place I like, and that's why I'm here."<sup>129</sup> Describing her pleasure in the old Chinese couple from whom she rents a room, as well as the closeness of the sea, mountains, and city of Hong Kong, Yamaguchi observes, "For now, I'm healthy and occupied with work, study, and play, and I intend to continue enjoying my beloved Hong Kong."<sup>130</sup> For her part, Ozawa finds employment in the operations section of a Japanese department store, where, we are told, she eventually becomes the head of the Hong Kong branch of her company, attaining both professional satisfaction and continuing her fannish activities after-hours.

In the cases of both Ozawa and Yamaguchi, Hong Kong star fandom begets an engagement with Hong Kong that is 'authentic' not because it has achieved either historical or sociopolitical self-reflexivity, but because it is comprised of, and situated squarely within, banal experiences of everyday life in Hong Kong. Of her responsibilities within the Japanese department store at which she works, Ozawa describes her Cantonese-language meetings with local Hong Kong staff explaining,

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<sup>129</sup> Yahiro, *Honkon de hataraku josei*, 54.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

“To tell the truth, I went to school to study Cantonese for two months, but since then it’s just been a matter of getting used to it, so I’m nowhere near fluent. It’s not like I understand everything [the staff] says, so I have to guess the parts I don’t get....And they also guess what I’m trying to say. Their minds are much quicker than those of Japanese, and they are imaginative, so it really helps.”<sup>131</sup> This is the kind of engagement that David Morley terms “community-in-difference’, which recognizes the importance of dialogue about our ineradicable differences...and focuses on the mundane pragmatics of neighborliness.”<sup>132</sup> It is this attitude of neighborliness within the context of fan-centered transcultural affect, as the *lived experience* of “the complexity of uneven processes of transnational cultural circulation,”<sup>133</sup> that is the minimum prerequisite of a socially conscious transnationalism, always incomplete, always contingent, and always a journey rather than a destination.

Not insignificantly, the accounts in these books of women’s experiences of Hong Kong are part of volumes that themselves are firmly ensconced within the literature of Japanese female internationalism discussed in Chapter One. The narrative trajectory of each, predictably, is one of varying degrees of frustration with the Japanese status quo, perseverance over adversity, and a sense of having discovered personal fulfillment – however ambivalent – outside the Japanese context. Each presumably bears the onus of the socio-political work of this discourse, both in the progressive sense of offering women alternatives to Japanese gender hierarchies and roles, as well as in the more regressive sense of their experiences substituting for the

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<sup>131</sup> Sasahara, *Honkon de OL shiyō!*, 108.

<sup>132</sup> Morley, “Belongings,” 441.

<sup>133</sup> Iwabuchi, “Undoing Inter-national Fandom,” 94.



serious work of finding a viable place for Japan within an increasingly close East Asian political and economic sphere. The roles performed by these narratives thus serve as a reminder that, at the level of discourse – whether popular or academic – the meanings we attribute to women’s everyday activities are circumscribed by competing and contested interests that may or may not adequately reflect their lived experiences.

## **Conclusion**

The intersection of the internal and external worlds of fandom – its imaginative and material practices, its affective and empirical experience – is where, in the transcultural context, the politics of fandom lie. The ways in which the fans of one culture understand and negotiate the differences of another with which they have constructed a subjective intimacy, as well as their lived interactions with the places and people of those other cultures, are a telling indicator of the potential – and limitations – of fandom to effect transcultural transformation. By way of tracing the various ways in which Japanese female fans have interacted with the Chinese cultural, and Hong Kong local, contexts of their Hong Kong star fandom, I have examined two key modes of Japanese women’s fan activity: *dōjinshi* production and star *okkake*. As my analysis of star-centered *dōjinshi* demonstrates, fans’ appropriations and manipulations of Chinese language and Hong Kong star personae in so-called ‘parody’ *dōjinshi* reveal a specifically fan cultural orientation of which national/ethnic difference was but one ancillary attribute. The negotiation of such difference came to the fore only in those works that sought to rationalize fans’ interpellation by the Hong Kong stars with whom they enjoyed a subjective intimacy as ‘Japanese’, revealing a

diversity of ways in which fans attempted to maintain the ontological stability of their affective fandom.

In my discussion of the star-centered travel and *okkake* practices of transnationally mobile fans, I have discussed the ways in which fans' experiences of 'media' spaces throughout Hong Kong similarly worked to intensify their cross-border feelings of intimacy with stars. The sense of 'being there' provoked by visits to the sites of filmmaking, as well as encounters with 'real' stars in their Hong Kong habitus, conveyed a sense of the authenticity of stars that frequently reinforced their existing star personae. Where disjunctive experiences of stars threatened fans' perceptions of them, they performed the imaginative work of framing these experiences within the context of their existing knowledges, at once maintaining the seeming stability of the star persona while, at the same time, reinforcing their own sense of 'mastery' over its discourses. Here, too, differences of national or ethnic culture were minimized through recourse to a fannish interpretative framework.

Finally, this chapter has examined the emergence and implications of fans' national self-reflexivity as a means of understanding the transformative potential, as well as limitations, of transcultural fandom. I have argued here that what transformations are effected are the result of fans' lived experiences of the intersection of inculcated ways of understanding different ethnicities and perceptions of their own national, gender, and fan subjectivities. Such transformations, I argue, are less a destination than a process, continually inflected by new encounters and knowledges that, at best, help fans successfully negotiate the "mundane pragmatics of neighborliness" on a regional, and global, scale.

## CONCLUSION

“He personifies some kind of an unfulfilled dream a lot of middle-aged women (in Japan) must have.”

Japanese film executive on South Korean star Bae Yong Joon<sup>1</sup>

“The women are creating a fantasy...because they are disappointed in reality.”

Prof. Kim Eun Shil<sup>2</sup>

### From Hong Kong to Hanryū

In 2004, the unanticipated and apparently unprecedented Japanese fandom of South Korean star Bae Yong Joon, who starred in the immensely popular television melodrama *Winter Sonata*, attracted the attention of news organizations worldwide with its manifestations of fan hysteria. Laura Miller observes that, in the press,

Yon-sama fans were portrayed as hordes of hysterical, nymphomaniac old biddies....Thousands of overexcited women were said to have besieged and swarmed Narita and Haneda airports during Bae’s visits to Tokyo, causing mini-stampedes, sort of like buffalo. The old girls were reported on with much contempt for buying expensive memorabilia and for holding group birthday parties in *yakiniku* (grilled meat) joints to celebrate Yon-sama’s birthday.... Famous film director Beat Takeshi asserted that the “Yonfluenza” of the Japanese “hags” was no different than their husband’s [sic] sex tourism to Korea.<sup>3</sup>

As Miller illustrates, Japanese fans of what was termed the *Hanryū* (Korean Wave) became the perfect repository of decades-old anxieties about women’s practices of popular culture consumption and, in particular, their (mis)uses of leisure time. This

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<sup>1</sup> Lukas Schwarzscher, “Korean Star Causes Frenzy,” *Variety* (December 6 – 12, 2004), 26.

<sup>2</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, “What’s Korean for ‘Real Man’? Ask a Japanese Woman” *New York Times* (December 23, 2004), A3.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, “Korean TV Dramas,” 17.

was in stark contrast with the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, which had avoided such criticism largely on the basis of its mass media articulation with 1990s discourses of Japanese 'Asianization'. By the time that South Korean stars began attracting attention not only in Japan, but throughout East Asia, the 1997 Asian economic crisis had taken its toll on Japanese imaginings of a Confucian-centered regional economy that might constitute a challenge to the dominance of West Europe and, in particular, the United States; at the same time, China – newly reunited with Hong Kong – was beginning to flex its own economic wings, further disrupting a nascent sense of East Asian regional unity. Thus, by the time of the *Hanryū* in Japan, there was no longer any advantage to characterizing female fans as anything other than frenzied, indiscriminate consumers.

At the same time, such reportage also noted women's desire for alternatives to stalemated Japanese gender relations, pointing to the hole filled in the lives of middle-aged women by Bae and other South Korean stars, like those of Hong Kong before them. In terms heavily inflected by not just popular, but especially academic scholarship of the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars, journalists quoted diplomats, housewives, producers, and academics to emphasize the ways in which the Korean Wave "touch[es] upon the nostalgia for an imagined past, and upon middle-aged women's yearning for an emotional connection that they lack and perhaps believe they cannot find in Japan."<sup>4</sup> In so doing, they summarily reproduced an academic discourse that has come to characterize the ways that we talk about women's fandom in the transnational context.

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<sup>4</sup> Onishi, "What's Korean for 'Real Man'?" A3.

The Japanese *Hanryū* phenomenon equally precipitated a ‘boom’ within English, Japanese, and Korean academic literature. In her seminal essay, “Banality in Cultural Studies,” Meaghan Morris likens intellectual fashions to the booms of Japanese popular culture, both embodying “a massive wave of collective, but culturally localized, passion – for a musician, a film star, an intellectual topic or figure which is as ephemeral as it is absolute for participants while it happens.”<sup>5</sup> Morris argues that such a perspective at once “involves a pre-emptive prohibition and limitation of activity, as well as passion and enthusiasm”<sup>6</sup> borne out in the *Hanryū* context by three discursive trends that distinguished its discussion in academic literature in the latter half of the last decade. Soobum Lee and Hyejung Ju identify these as: 1) commodity-oriented explorations of the reasons for, and potential profitability of, East Asian *Hanryū*; 2) considerations of the East Asian appeal of South Korean stars and media, evolving from arguments stressing inter-regional cultural affinities to more nuanced explorations of the historical and sociopolitical backdrop of their consumption and commodification; and 3) the implications of *Hanryū* within the context of “Western-centric globalization.”<sup>7</sup>

In particular, historical tensions (including a protracted period of colonization and forced emigration) between Japan and Korea have translated to a literature that is singularly concerned with the potential (or lack thereof) of *Hanryū* fandom to counteract lingering prejudice against Koreans among Japanese. In perhaps the only English-language scholarly work to overtly contrast *Hanryū* with the Japanese fandom

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<sup>5</sup> Morris, “Banality in Cultural Studies,” 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Lee and Ju, “Korean Television Dramas,” 80-81.

of Hong Kong stars, Iwabuchi marks this, as well as the greater “scope and intensity”<sup>8</sup> of *Hanryū*, as a critical distinction between Japanese fans of Korean and Hong Kong media and stars. Based on a now-codified conceptualization of the Japanese female fans of Hong Kong stars as more inclined to “consciously indulge in the act of consuming media images and [not] pay much interest in directly connecting with the people and culture of Hong Kong,” Iwabuchi surmises that the melodramatic bent of South Korean television texts made their Japanese fans more likely to “actively mak[e] contact with Korean culture, society, and people.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, there are critical differences between the Japanese fandom of Hong Kong stars and that of the Korean Wave, yet few of them can be accounted for within Iwabuchi’s socio-politically contextualized framework. As I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this dissertation, there are myriad contexts that contribute to meaning-making in fandom, including (but not limited to) industrial strategizing and transformation, sociopolitical and economic discourses of gender, and fan cultural histories, practices, and subjectivities. Considered from this perspective, what can a pragmatics of transcultural fandom that attempts to take into account these multiple contexts reveal about the relationship of Japanese Hong Kong star fandom to more contemporary *Hanryū*?

In the 2002-3 period during which I conducted fieldwork in Japan for this dissertation, Hong Kong star fans were already beginning to exhibit an incipient interest in South Korean stars, lamenting that, particularly in films of the post-1997 era, the appeal of Hong Kong stars seemed to be on the wane. Fans’ changing

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<sup>8</sup> Iwabuchi, “When the Korean Wave Meets Resident Koreans,” 245.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

perceptions of Hong Kong stars were no doubt influenced by the sharp drop in mass media reportage on Hong Kong and, especially, its popular culture in the wake of the Hong Kong handover, which had the effect of erasing Hong Kong from the mediascapes of all but the most devoted fans. At the same time, fans' waning interest reflected a decline that resonated throughout the Hong Kong entertainment industry itself, the result of the Asian economic crisis and, in particular, a system of hyperproduction<sup>10</sup> that led to an industrial turn away from the carefully cultivated stars of the Hong Kong television industry in the 1970s and 80s to more lucrative and disposable idols.<sup>11</sup>

While such transformations were occurring in Hong Kong, the Korean film industry was undergoing its own, more positive, transformations, led by government and corporate investment in film productions that allowed South Korean filmmakers to improve the production values of Korean cinema and find an international audience for their work at such state-sponsored events as the Pusan International Film Festival, begun in 1996.<sup>12</sup> In Japan, the early popularity of Korean action blockbusters such as *Shiri* (Kang Je-Gyu, 1999), as well as the melodrama *Christmas in August* (Hur Jin-ho, 1998) paved the way for stars of the Korean Wave, whose "pan-East Asian soft masculinity"<sup>13</sup> drew from "South Korea's traditional *seonbi* masculinity (which is heavily influenced by Chinese Confucian *wen* masculinity), Japan's *bishōnen* (pretty boy) masculinity, and global metrosexual masculinity"<sup>14</sup> in an aesthetic structure of

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<sup>10</sup> Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, 68-9.

<sup>11</sup> Leung, "Discursive Stardom in Hong Kong," 30.

<sup>12</sup> Shin, "Globalization and New Korean Cinema," 53-54.

<sup>13</sup> Jung, "Chogukjeok Pan-East Asian Soft Masculinity."

<sup>14</sup> Jung, *Korean Masculinities*, 39.

feeling that resonated throughout the East Asian regional context. This was reflected in publications such as the 2001 *Kinema Junpō* 'mook', *Kankoku/Honkon besuto sutā serekushon* (South Korea/Hong Kong best star selection), a book that featured alongside profiles of such Hong Kong cinema up-and-comers Nicholas Tse, Sam Lee, Gigi Leung, and Shu Qi, those of no fewer than twenty South Korean film and television stars. Indeed, it could be argued that the Hong Kong film-centered publishing boom of the 1990s, which began in the 1988 release of two small, slender volumes entitled *Za Honkon mūbī 1&2* (The Hong Kong movie 1&2) and culminated in the 1995-7 period with the publication of over 30 books and magazine special issues devoted to Hong Kong cinema and stars,<sup>15</sup> set the stage for *Hanryū*-centered publishing in the 2000s through which the fandom of Korean stars and television dramas has been cultivated.

Yet, where affinities of written language, as well as the widespread, and eminently affordable, circulation of Hong Kong films on VCD, contributed to fans' ability to circumvent the industrial logics of Hong Kong film distribution in Japan, thus intensifying their sense of 'ownership' of both stars and their own fandom, such factors played no role in the dissemination of South Korean media in Japan. Indeed, given the present-day ubiquity of South Korean television dramas on Japanese TV, further study of their Japanese circulation would benefit from greater attention to the role of media industrial synergies in both South Korea and Japan in bringing them to Japanese audiences. Thus, the question of how South Korean media have circulated in Japan, particularly beyond the overdetermined moment of the 2002 debut of the

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<sup>15</sup> Yoshida, "Honkon eiga o yori tanoshimu tame no bukkurisuto (A booklist for the greater enjoyment of Hong Kong cinema)," *Kinema Junpō* (March 14, 1997), 163-166.



television drama *Winter Sonata* on NHK, Japan's national broadcaster, as well as how their affective meanings to Japanese fans have been produced in discourse, practices of consumption, and negotiations of national and cultural difference, would benefit from the perspective that a pragmatics of transcultural fandom might afford.

## **Summary**

This dissertation constitutes a preliminary attempt to map a pragmatics of transcultural fandom through its examination of the 1980s and 1990s Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong cinema. The unwieldy terms of its description alone foreground the need for a theoretical perspective that takes into account not only its sociopolitical and historical contexts, but also the discursive and material contexts of the production of gendered fan and consumer identities, the affective contexts of meaning-making, and the trans-national contexts through which media are both consumed and understood across borders. In Chapter One, discussion of the discursive production of Hong Kong cinema, stars, and Japanese female fans in Japanese mass media reportage and film industrial strategy highlights the purposes to which each was deployed in broader conceptualizations of Japan's role within both the East Asian cultural sphere, and, more specifically, the global film marketplace. Jackie Chan's rise to Japanese stardom, strategized by distributor Tōhō-Tōwa and articulated with girls' idol fandom, as well as his subsequent scapegoating as emblematic of a juvenile (Japanese) mainstream, speaks to the fact that "stardom is not a stable form of synthesis but an ongoing process of negotiation, a transnational negotiation in

particular.”<sup>16</sup> Within the transnational context, where the meanings of star personae are unmoored from their local contexts and repurposed within “various and contradictory political, ideological, and cultural contexts”<sup>17</sup> elsewhere, stars afford us a way of discerning the “moral occult”<sup>18</sup> of public practices of spectatorship and fandom.

Analysis of the ways in which Japanese women were interpellated as fans of a newly ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong cinema draws attention to the semiotics of East Asia-oriented cinephilia in 1990s Japan. This was exemplified in film festival programmers’ and, in particular, fledgling distributor Hiroko Shinohara’s careful mobilization of the contradictory languages and aesthetics of postmodern irony, asynchronous regional cosmopolitanism, and global film spectatorship. Set against the structuring absence of mainstream Jackie Chan fandom, ‘fashionable’ Hong Kong cinema comprised the cosmopolitan films of Wong Kar-wai, Peter Chan, and Fruit Chan, articulated with both the ‘trendy’ sites of women’s material and cultural consumption in Japan’s urban centers, as well as independent and experimental cinema of the global film marketplace. Fans of this ‘fashionable’ cinema were equally characterized in the mass media – by commentators, film industry insiders, and sometimes fans themselves – as belonging to a demographic of young, urban, single, professional women; a group which was similarly implicated in discourses of what Karen Kelsky has termed women’s ‘internationalism’. Through characterizations of these fans as at once ‘internationalist’ and ‘Asianist’ in orientation, discourses constituting the Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars imagined them as the vanguard of broader

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<sup>16</sup> Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa*, 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 5.

Japanese East Asian cultural regionalism. While this made them susceptible to criticism of the inauthenticity of Japanese regional engagement, it also afforded fans a means of rationalizing their fannish pursuits in such a way as to avoid their denigration in the popular Japanese imagination.

The examination in Chapter Two of the material contexts of Japanese women's fandom of Hong Kong stars in the 1980s and 1990s reveals a far more expansive fandom – demographically, culturally, and geographically – than that of mass media discourses of 'fashionable' Hong Kong film and fans. Discussion of the structural affinities of Japanese and Hong Kong entertainment industries in the 1970s and 80s offers a gateway to understanding the transcultural homologies of Japanese and Hong Kong stars' performances of stardom; in this way, we are able to begin to conceptualize the affective appeal of Hong Kong stars to Japanese fans. In particular, the value placed on acts of 'fan service', as well as stars' perceived approachability and 'ordinariness', by both Hong Kong and Japanese star fans translated into a Hong Kong star system that was particularly resonant in the Japanese context. Hong Kong stars' maturity, relative to that of Johnny's boy-bands, and their greater degree of accessibility to fans, made them especially appealing to a Japanese female fandom that skewed older than idol fans, and the breadth of their work – both industrially, spanning music, television, and cinema, as well as in terms of narrative genre – meant that Japanese fans' spectatorship of the films of a given actor exposed them to a far wider sampling of Hong Kong films than those of their Western cult counterparts.

Yet, as I argue, this female fandom was not as different from such cult fans as both those fans and Hong Kong's cult stars might otherwise have imagined. The

material practices of women's consumption of Hong Kong media, particularly outside Japan's mainstream media distribution channels, produced a fan subjectivity that was at once 'cult' and transcultural. This 'trans-cult-ural' fan subjectivity was born specifically of women's acquisition of otherwise niche Video CD players through mail-order and in the masculine environs of Tokyo's Akihabara and Osaka's Den-Den Town, as well as through their acts of seeking out Hong Kong movie VCDs in such geographically peripheral specialty shops as Tokyo's *otaku*-inflected Jasmine Tea and Cactus Club, as well as Osaka's China Center. At once constituting and reinforcing women's cult knowledges of Hong Kong stars through media organizational systems intended to capitalize on limited space, such sites of Hong Kong film consumption facilitated fans' movement into the Hong Kong star-consumer sphere proper.

In contrast with much of the literature examining women's practices of media spectatorship in the home, in which the gendered division of labor and hierarchies of technological competency effectively marginalized – and minimized – women's media consumption, this study finds that, to a significant degree, Japanese women's passionate 'trans-cult-ural' fandom was facilitated by family members. For such fans, their activities did not constitute resistance to their socially proscribed gender roles as mothers, wives, and workers; rather, they were able – and enabled – to claim the resources of time and money in pursuit of an activity that served the interests of no one but fans themselves. Although intense, cultish fandom is typically understood as antithetical to an 'encumbered' domestic life, the familial support of their activities enjoyed by such fans suggests the extent to which their desire for a 'selfhood' outside the household was acknowledged within it.

Chapter Three interrogates the politics of transcultural fandom through analysis of two sites of fan activity, fan-produced *dōjinshi* and practices of transnational *okkake*, in attempting to better grasp both the possibilities and limitations of transcultural fandom in effecting cross-border transformation of fans' national cultural subjectivities. Discussion of 'parody' *dōjinshi* that repurposed Hong Kong star personae within both Japanese fan cultural and Hong Kong film narrative contexts suggest that it was fans' own affective interests in specific stars, rather than any conscious negotiation of cultural difference, that motivated their transculturally-inflected manipulations. Yet, where *dōjinshi* exchanged fan fictional narrative for fan reportage of close encounters with Hong Kong stars, through concerts and *okkake* sightings in both Japan and Hong Kong, fans' interpellation as "Japanese" by both stars and Hong Kong residents alike constituted a potential point of disjuncture between the culturally seamless potential space of affect-oriented fan activity and their empirical experiences. The disruption to fans' sense of ontological security in their transcultural fandom frequently compelled them to reaffirm their affective intimacy with a star particularly through recourse to those specialized knowledges of star personae that afforded them a sense of 'ownership' of the star himself.

While much star-centered tourism on the part of Japanese fans was mediated through organizations with a clear economic investment in their activities, the more 'independent' travel of *okkake* fans brought them, however temporarily, into the habitus of everyday life in Hong Kong. Motivated by a desire to experience an intensified, transtemporal proximity to stars through seeking out their 'footsteps' in both Hong Kong's film shooting locations and sites of daily experience (restaurants,

shops, etc.), such fans cultivated a particularly localized knowledge of Hong Kong itself through their uses of public transportation, as well as through repeated visits to meaningful sites that conveyed a sense of Hong Kong as fluid, rather than static media, space. Through such experiences, some fans arrived at the kind of national self-reflexivity that typically characterizes ‘good’ fandom within the critique of transcultural fandoms. Yet, I argue that fans’ explicit and implicit interpellation as “Japanese,” rather than necessarily provoking greater cross-cultural awareness, can also reveal the racial and ethnic contours of women’s understanding of both Hong Kong and their relation to it.

Thus it is that I locate the transformative potential of transcultural fandom not within national self-reflexivity, per se, but in the ways in which fans negotiate dissonances between expectation and reality. In the end, I argue that it is the entry into a *process*, rather than a never-reached destination, of learning to live with, and among, people whose assumptions and experiences are different from our own, and with whom we may never fully agree but to whom we accord the respect we give our own, that is the best realization of this transformative potential.

### **Thinking Ahead**

In arguing for a pragmatics of transcultural fandom that is attuned to the variety of contexts that inflect, both materially and semiotically, fans’ consumption of media across borders, this dissertation opens the door to a wide range of perspectives from which to consider such fandom. In this dissertation, I have touched upon a number of contexts that have worked to both produce and define transcultural fans,

ranging from the discursive to the material to the affective; yet, here, my focus overwhelmingly has been on fans themselves, to the exclusion of the industries – both Japanese and Hong Kong – that sought to capitalize on their interest in Hong Kong stars. A further contextualized study ideally would examine this fandom from an industrial perspective, seeking to better grasp the role played by Japanese women in stars' and producers' conceptualization of an East Asian regional audience of Hong Kong cinema. Closer attention to the Hong Kong context of Japanese women's fandom would attend to their perception within the Hong Kong mass media, as well as among local Hong Kong and other East and Southeast Asian fans of Hong Kong stars.

The Japanese female fandom of Hong Kong stars in the 1990s served as the impetus for a handful of transnational co-productions that attempted to capitalize on both their interest in certain stars – Leslie Cheung, Andy Lau, and Takeshi Kaneshiro chief among them – as well as fans' own perceived intimacy with them, through cross-cultural narratives foregrounding the relationship between these stars and fans' Japanese stand-ins. Yet, more than their narrative coupling of stars and fan-proxies, it is these films' ambivalent reception by the very female fans to whom they were targeted that reveals the ways in which both Hong Kong and Japanese film industries (mis)understood the fandom. In this sense, a more contextualized study of the fandom would take into account the attempt by industries already engaged in practices of transnational filmmaking to articulate it with an incipient East Asian regional audience.

The persistence of this fandom into the 2000s suggests that, in order to better understand its pursuit within the context of intensified digital communications, further research should focus on the ways in which widespread use of the Internet beginning in the late 1990s affected both its material constitution, particularly through online sales of Hong Kong media, as well as its affective meanings. Here, I am particularly interested in the shift, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, from *dōjinshi* and fan publications as sites of community-building among fans, to star-centered webpages and, in particular, bulletin boards (BBSs) that both fostered, and sometimes inhibited, a sense of community among not only Japanese fans, but also global fans of Hong Kong stars. Particularly given ongoing ambivalence about Japan within the broader regional sphere, non-Japanese fans' perceptions of the Japanese female fans would constitute a useful barometer through which to further gauge the transformative potential of transcultural fandom.



APPENDIX ONE:

HONG KONG FILM TITLES IN CHINESE AND JAPANESE

ENGLISH	TRAD. CHINESE (PINYIN)	JAPANESE (ROMANIZED)
<b>A Better Tomorrow</b> (John Woo, 1986)	英雄本色 ( <i>Yingxiong bense</i> )	男たちの挽歌 ( <i>Otokotachi no banka</i> )
<b>A Moment of Romance</b> (Benny Chan, 1990)	天若有情 ( <i>Tianrou youqing</i> )	アンディ・ラウの逃避行 ( <i>Andi Rau no tōhikō</i> )
<b>As Tears Go By</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1988)	旺角卡門 ( <i>Wangjiao Kamen</i> )	いますぐ抱きしめたい ( <i>Ima sugu dakishimetai</i> )
<b>Ashes of Time</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1994)	東邪西毒 ( <i>Dongxie xidu</i> )	楽園の瑕 ( <i>Rakuen no kizu</i> )
<b>Blood Will Tell</b> (Evan Yang, 1954)	海棠紅 ( <i>Haitang hong</i> )	海棠紅 ( <i>Kaitōkō</i> )
<b>Boat People</b> (Ann Hui, 1982)	投奔怒海 ( <i>Touben nu hai</i> )	ボート・ピープル ( <i>Bōto pīpuru</i> )
<b>The Cannonball Run</b> (Hal Needham, 1983)	炮彈飛車 ( <i>Paodan feiche</i> )	キャノンボール ( <i>Kyannonbōru</i> )
<b>A Chinese Ghost Story</b> (Tsui Hark, 1987)	倩女幽魂 ( <i>Qiannü youhun</i> )	チャイニーズ・ゴースト・ストーリー ( <i>Chainīzu gōsuto sutori</i> )
<b>A Chinese Ghost Story II</b> (Ching Siu-tung, 1990)	倩女幽魂 II: 人間道 ( <i>Qiannü youhun II: renjian dao</i> )	チャイニーズ・ゴースト・ストーリー 2 ( <i>Chainīzu gōsuto sutori 2</i> )
<b>Chungking Express</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1994)	重慶森林 ( <i>Chongqing senlin</i> )	恋する惑星 ( <i>Koi suru wakusei</i> )
<b>City of Sadness</b> (Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989)	悲情城市 ( <i>Beiqing chengshi</i> )	悲情城市 ( <i>Hijō jōshi</i> )
<b>City on Fire</b> (Ringo Lam, 1987)	龍虎風雲 ( <i>Longhu fengyun</i> )	友は風の彼方に ( <i>Tomo wa kaze no kanata ni</i> )
<b>Chocolate Inspector</b> (Philip Chan, 1986)	神探朱古力 ( <i>Shentan zhuguli</i> )	Mr. Boo! チョコレート インスペクター ( <i>Mr. Boo! Chocolate Inspector</i> )

<b>Days of Being Wild</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1990)	阿飛正傳 ( <i>A Fei zhengzhuang</i> )	欲望の翼 ( <i>Yokubō no tsubasa</i> )
<b>Diary of a Big Man</b> (Chor Yuen, 1988)	大丈夫日記 ( <i>Dazhangfu riji</i> )	大丈夫日記 ( <i>Daijōbu nikki</i> )
<b>Dream Lovers</b> (Tony Au, 1986)	夢中人 ( <i>Mengzhongren</i> )	夢中人 ( <i>Yumenakabito</i> )
<b>Drunken Master</b> (Yuen Woo-ping, 1978)	醉拳 ( <i>Zui quan</i> )	ドラクモクンキー粋拳 ( <i>Doranku monkī suiken</i> )
<b>Enter the Dragon</b> (Robert Clouse, 1973)	龍争虎鬥 ( <i>Longzheng hudou</i> )	燃えよドラゴン ( <i>Moeyo doragon</i> )
<b>Fallen Angels</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1995)	墮落天使 ( <i>Duoluo tianshi</i> )	天使の涙 ( <i>Tenshi no namida</i> )
<b>Fearless Hyena, The</b> (Jackie Chan/Kenneth Tsang, 1979)	笑拳怪招 ( <i>Xiao quan guai zhao</i> )	クレージーモンキー笑拳 ( <i>Kurējī monkī shōken</i> )
<b>Fist of Fury</b> (Lo Wei, 1972)	精武門 ( <i>Jing wu men</i> )	ドラゴン危機一発 ( <i>Doragon kiki ippatsu</i> )
<b>Five Lucky Stars</b> (Sammo Hung, 1983)	奇謀妙計五福星 ( <i>Qimou miaoji wufu xing</i> )	五福星 ( <i>Gofukusei</i> )
<b>God of Gamblers</b> (Wong Jing, 1989)	賭神 ( <i>Du shen</i> )	ゴッド・ギャンブラー ( <i>Goddo gyanburā</i> )
<b>Golden Swallow</b> (O Sing-pui, 1987)	金燕子 ( <i>Jinyanzi</i> )	ゴールデンズワロー 魔翔伝説 ( <i>Gōrudensuwarō mashō densetsu</i> )
<b>Happy Together</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 1997)	春光乍洩 ( <i>Chunguang zhaxie</i> )	ブエノスアイレス ( <i>Buenosairesu</i> )
<b>He Ain't Heavy, He's My Father</b> (Peter Chan/Lee Chi-ngai, 1993)	新難兄難弟 ( <i>Xin nanxiong nandi</i> )	月夜の願い ( <i>Tsukiyo no negai</i> )
<b>He's A Woman, She's A Man</b> (Peter Chan, 1994)	金枝玉葉 ( <i>Jinzhī Yuye</i> )	君さえいれば ( <i>Kimi sae ireba</i> )
<b>Hello Dracula</b> (Chiu Chung-hing, 1985)	殭屍小子 ( <i>Jiangshi xiaozi</i> )	キョンシーズ ( <i>Kyonshīzu</i> )

<b>Hello! Dracula 2</b> (Wang Chih-cheng, 1987)	哈囉殭屍 ( <i>Haluo jiangshi</i> )	幽玄道士 ( <i>Yūgen dōshi</i> )
<b>High Risk</b> (Wong Jing, 1995)	鼠胆龍威 ( <i>Shudan longwei</i> )	ハイリスク ( <i>Hairisuku</i> )
<b>Hong Kong, 1941</b> (Leong Po-chih, 1984)	等待黎明 ( <i>Deng dai li ming</i> )	風の輝く朝に ( <i>Kaze no kagayaku asa ni</i> )
<b>In the Mood for Love</b> (Wong Kar-wai, 2000)	花樣年華 ( <i>Huayang nianhua</i> )	花樣年華 ( <i>Kayō nenka</i> )
<b>Infatuation</b> (Chan Kwok-hei, 1985)	1/2 段情 ( <i>Er fen yi duanxing</i> )	1/2 段情 ( <i>Hāfu danjō</i> )
<b>Just Like Weather</b> (Allen Fong, 1986)	美國心 ( <i>Meiguoxin</i> )	ジャスト・ライク・ウェザー ( <i>Jasuto raiku uezā</i> )
<b>Kid, The</b> (Jacob Cheung, 1999)	流星語 ( <i>Liuxing yu</i> )	流星語 ( <i>Ryūseigo</i> )
<b>Killer, The</b> (John Woo, 1989)	喋血雙雄 ( <i>Diexue shuangxiong</i> )	狼/男たちの挽歌 最終章 ( <i>Ōkami/Otokotachi no banka saishūshō</i> )
<b>Kingdom and the Beauty, The</b> (Li Han-hsiang, 1958)	江山美人 ( <i>Jiangshan meiren</i> )	江山美人 ( <i>Kōzan bijin</i> )
<b>Laughing Times</b> (John Woo, 1980)	滑稽時代 ( <i>Huaji shidai</i> )	モダンタイム・キッド ( <i>Modantaimu kiddo</i> )
<b>Little Girl Named Cabbage</b> (Zhang Shankun, 1955)	小白菜 ( <i>Xiao baicai</i> )	小白菜 ( <i>Shōhakusai</i> )
<b>Love Unto Waste</b> (Stanley Kwan, 1986)	地下情 ( <i>Dixiaqing</i> )	地下情 ( <i>Chikajō</i> )
<b>Lucky Stars Go Places</b> (Eric Tsang, 1986)	最佳福星 ( <i>Zuijia fuxing</i> )	十福星 ( <i>Jūfukusei</i> )
<b>Moumantai</b> (Alfred Cheung, 1999)	冇問題 ( <i>Maowenti</i> )	無問題 ( <i>Mōmantai</i> )
<b>Mr. Vampire</b> (Ricky Lau, 1985)	殭屍先生 ( <i>Jiangshi xiansheng</i> )	靈幻道士 ( <i>Reigen dōshi</i> )

<b>Prison on Fire</b> (Ringo Lam, 1987)	監獄風雲 ( <i>Jianyu fengyun</i> )	プリズン・オン・ファイアー ( <i>Purizun on faiā</i> )
<b>Rich and Famous</b> (Taylor Wong, 1987)	江湖情 ( <i>Jiang hu qing</i> )	愛と復讐の挽歌 野望編 ( <i>Ai to fukushū no banka yabōhen</i> )
<b>Romancing Star, The</b> (Wong Jing, 1987)	精裝追女仔 ( <i>Jingzhuang zhui nuzi</i> )	男たちのバッカ野朗 ( <i>Otokotachi no bakka yarō</i> )
<b>Rouge</b> (Stanley Kwan, 1987)	胭脂扣 ( <i>Yanzhi kou</i> )	ルージュ ( <i>Rūju</i> )
<b>Rumble in the Bronx</b> (Stanley Tong, 1995)	紅番區 ( <i>Hong fan qu</i> )	レッド・ブロンクス ( <i>Reddo buronkusu</i> )
<b>Snake in the Eagle's Shadow</b> (Yuen Woo-ping, 1978)	蛇形刁手 ( <i>Shexing diaoshou</i> )	スネーキーモンキー蛇拳 ( <i>Sunēkī monkī jyaken</i> )
<b>Song of the Exile</b> (Ann Hui, 1990)	客途秋恨 ( <i>Ke tu qiu hen</i> )	客途秋恨 ( <i>Kyakutō shūkon</i> )
<b>Sorrows of the Forbidden City</b> (Zhu Shilin, 1948)	清宮秘史 ( <i>Qingong mishi</i> )	清宮秘史 ( <i>Seikyū hishi</i> )
<b>Soul</b> (Shu Kei, 1986)	老娘夠騷 ( <i>Laoniang gou sao</i> )	ソウル ( <i>Souru</i> )
<b>Starry is the Night</b> (Ann Hui, 1988)	今夜星光燦爛 ( <i>Jinye xingguang canlan</i> )	今夜星光燦爛 ( <i>Konya seikō sanran</i> )
<b>Story of Woo Viet, The</b> (Ann Hui, 1981)	胡越的故事 ( <i>Hu Yue de gushi</i> )	獣たちの熱い夜 ( <i>Kemonotachi no atsui yoru</i> )
<b>Trouble Couples</b> (Eric Tsang, 1987)	開心勿語 ( <i>Kaixin wuyu</i> )	ときめき美少女隊 ( <i>Tokimeki bishōjotai</i> )
<b>Young Master, The</b> (Jackie Chan, 1980)	師弟出馬 ( <i>Shidi chuma</i> )	ヤングマスター ( <i>Yangu masutā</i> )

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### EDUCATION

INDIANA UNIVERSITY Bloomington, Indiana.  
Ph.D. Communication and Culture. 2011.  
Minor: East Asian Studies.  
Dissertation Supervisor: Prof. Barbara Klinger

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M.A. Communication and Culture. 2000.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY Columbus, Ohio.  
M.A. East Asian Languages and Literatures. 1991.  
Thesis: *Akutagawa Ryunosuke: Lectures on Poe and Their Applications*.  
Thesis Advisor: Prof. James Morita

KENYON COLLEGE Gambier, Ohio.  
B.A., *cum laude*. English Literature. 1988.  
Thesis: *Beyond the Pale: An Analysis of Pride in Doctor Faust, Frankenstein, and the Picture of Dorian Gray*. High Pass.

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR. (1998-2001; 2003-2005). Department of Communication and Culture. Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Courses taught include C202 Media in the Global Context (2005), C201 Race, Ethnicity, and the Media (2004), C190 Introduction to Media (1998-99), C121 Public Speaking (1999-2000). Grader for Dr. Chris Anderson (C290 Hollywood I/C292 Hollywood II, 2003-4) and Dr. Robert Terrill (C205 Introduction to Communication and Culture, 2000).

LECTURER. (1996-1997). Department of British and American Literature. Otemae University, Hyogo, Japan. Courses taught include English Composition, English Reading Comprehension.

INSTRUCTOR. (1991-1992). Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. The Ohio State University Mansfield, Mansfield, Ohio. Taught J231 Elements of Japanese Culture.

VISITING INSTRUCTOR. (1991-1992). Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio. Courses taught include Japanese 11-12 First-Year Japanese, Japanese 13-14 Second-Year Japanese.

INSTRUCTOR. (Summer, 1991). Department of Russian and Eastern Languages. University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky. Co-instructed pilot intensive course in introductory Japanese language.

TEACHING ASSOCIATE. (1989-1991). Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Courses taught include J101-3 First Year Japanese, J101-2 Intensive First Year Japanese, J231 Elements of Japanese Culture.

ASSISTANT ENGLISH TEACHER. (1988-1989). Oita Tomei High School, Oita, Japan.

- Invited Lecture (22 April, 2005): Indiana University East Asian Studies Center High School Honors Seminar, "Motion Pictures and Motion in Pictures." (topic: Martial Arts in Chinese Film)
- Invited Lecture (23 May, 2003): *Honkon poppu karuchā to Nihon fuan komyunitei* [Hong Kong Pop Culture and the Japanese Fan Community]. Japan Foundation Asia Center *Ajia rikai kōza* [Understanding Asia Lecture Series].
- Invited Classroom Lecture (22 February, 2003): Asian Film course taught by Teruoka Sozo, Ikebukuro Community College, Japan. (topic: American Consumption of Hong Kong Cinema)
- Invited Classroom Lecture (6 November, 2002): Japanese Media course taught by Dr. Koichi Iwabuchi, International Christian University, Japan. (topic: Transnational Filmmaking)
- Invited Classroom Lecture (Spring 2001): E345 Screening Asians & Asian Americans course taught by Dr. Yinjing Zhang (topic: Postwar Film Romance)

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Media Spectatorship; Transcultural Fandom; Transnational Cinema; Cultural Studies; East Asian Cinema (Japan/Hong Kong/Taiwan/China); East Asian Popular Culture; Semiotics.

## AWARDS

Recipient, 2001 Monbukagakusho (Japanese Ministry of Education) Research Scholarship. Sponsoring Institution: Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan; Advisor: Yomota Goki (Inuhiko)

Co-winner, Robert Gunderson Lecture in Public Culture Competition, Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University. 2000.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Essays

Third Culture Kids: A Bakhtinian Analysis of Language and Multiculturalism in *Swallowtail Butterfly*. *Scope: An On-Line Journal of Film Studies*. February 2004.

Transnational Film and the Politics of Becoming: Negotiating East Asian Identity in *Hong Kong Night Club* and *Moonlight Express*. *Asian Cinema* 13.1. April 2002.

### Book Reviews

Book Review. *Planet Hong Kong*, David Bordwell. *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 7.2 September 2005.

Book Review. *Hong Kong Cinema: History, Arts, Identity*, Poshek Fu and David Desser, Eds. *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, Esther Yau, Ed. *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese* 6.1. January 2005.

Book Review. *Shohei Imamura*, James Quandt, Ed. *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*, Jeffrey Ruoff & Kenneth Ruoff, Eds. *Scope: An On-Line Journal of Film Studies*. April 2001.

### Translations

"Representing 'Old Japan': *Yokohama Shashin* and the Visual Culture of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century," by Satow Morihiro. *ICONICS International Studies of the Modern Image*, Vol 8. 2006.

"Function and Form in the Early Period of the *nyūsu eigakan*," by Fujioka Atsuhiko. *ICONICS International Studies of the Modern Image*, Vol.7. 2003

## ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

Discussant. "Female Filmmakers in Asia." Association for Asian Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 3, 2011.

"Wings of Desire: Hiroko Shinohara and the Making of 'Fashionable' Hong Kong Cinema in Japan." Presentation at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 1, 2011.

"I Heard the News Today: Digital Fandom and the Making of Trans/Cultural Geographies." Presentation at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, March 8, 2008.

"Your Place or Mine? Transnational *Okkake* and Global Media Fandom." Presentation at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Vancouver, Canada, March 5, 2006.



“Hong Kong Cinema and its Japanese Female Fans – A Comparative Study of Film Spectatorship Practices.” Presentation at the Association of Asian Studies Conference, San Diego, California, March 4, 2004.

“Nihon ni okeru Honkon eiga no shohi” (The Consumption of Hong Kong Films in Japan). Presentation at the Nihon eiga-shi kenkyu kai. Meiji Gakuin University. Tokyo, Japan, February 25, 2003.

“Seeing Stars: Japanese Women Watching Leslie Cheung.” Presentation at the Asian Studies Conference, Japan. Sophia University. Tokyo, Japan, June 22, 2002.

“Border Crossings: Gender and Sexuality in Transnational Film Spectatorship.” Presentation at Graduate Student Colloquium: “Gender, Sexuality, and Visuality in the Arts.” Kinsey Institute, Bloomington, Indiana, April 11, 2001.

“*Sleepless Town: Adaptation in the Age of Transnational Film.*” Presentation at the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs. Bloomington, Indiana, October 6, 2000.

“Third Culture Kids: Language and the Dilemma of Multiculturalism in *Swallowtail Butterfly.*” Presentation at Graduate Student Colloquium: “Reading Gender and Modernity: Japanese Literature, Film and Music.” Bloomington, Indiana, April 27, 2000.

“Alternative Realities: Language, Gender and the ‘Hidden Transcript’ in *Teahouse of the August Moon* and *Sayonara.*” Presentation at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature Conference. Louisville, Kentucky, February 25, 2000.

## **SERVICE**

EDITORIAL BOARD. Transformative Works and Cultures (Online, peer-reviewed journal). 2008 – present.

CO-ORGANIZER. East Asian Summer Film Series. Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University. June-August 2004.

ORGANIZER. New Japanese Film Festival. Department of Communication and Culture. Indiana University. October 31-November 2, 2003.

TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER. Male Bonding: Homosociality in Asian Film symposium. Meiji Gakuin University. June 16, 2002.

COLLOQUIA COMMITTEE MEMBER (2000-2001). Department of Communication and Culture. Indiana University.

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ORGANIZER. New Japanese Film Festival. Department of Communication and Culture. Indiana University. October 28-29, 2000.

CONFERENCE ASSISTANT. Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, Bloomington, Indiana. October 6-8, 2000.

PROGRAMMER/PRESENTER. (1999-2001;2003). East Asian Studies Center Film Series. Indiana University.

GRADUATE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE. (1998-2000). Department of Communication and Culture. Indiana University.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR. (Summer, 1990). Otomon Gakuen Study Abroad Program. The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

RESEARCH ASSISTANT. (1997-1998). Mainichi Newspapers. Washington Bureau, Washington, D.C.

STUDY ABROAD COORDINATOR. (1995-1997). Otemae University, Hyogo, Japan.

COORDINATOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. (1992-1995). Saihaku Town Hall, Tottori, Japan

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