

**Hong Kong Cinema under “One Country, Two Systems”:
Production, Reception and Policy**

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is to the best of my knowledge, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Hongjin HE (何虹瑾)

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(Signature)

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Abbreviations

ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait
CCP	the Chinese Communist Party
CEPA	Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement
CFCC	the China Film Co-production Corporation
CGI	computer generated imagery
DPP	the Democratic Progressive Party
ECFA	Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
FDF	the Film Development Fund
FGF	the Film Guarantee Fund
HAF	Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum
HKFA	Hong Kong Film Awards
HKFDC	Hong Kong Film Development Council
HKIFFS	Hong Kong International Film Festival Society
KMT	Kuomintang (the Chinese Nationalist Party)
MFP	Malay Film Production
PRC	the People's Republic of China
ROC	the Republic of China
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SARFT	the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television
SEF	Straits Exchange Foundation
STDM	the <i>Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau</i>
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WTO	the World Trade Organisation

ABSTRACT

Since the People's Republic of China (PRC) resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, the unprecedented "one country, two systems" (OCTS) policy has been put into practice. While this policy is usually considered from political, economic and legal perspectives, this study proposes a cultural studies approach to the understanding of this political formula through the examination of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, particularly its production and reception in relation to the policies of both the central and local governments. Crossing and combining the disciplines of cultural studies and film studies, this dissertation has two primary aims: to understand this "OCTS" era as a peculiar cultural-historical conjuncture through the lens of Hong Kong cinema; and to explore the impact and influence of the OCTS policy on Hong Kong cinema as a social, economic and cultural institution. Embedding a textual analysis within contextual inquiry, this study will unravel the interplay between the reflection of the OCTS in the Hong Kong cinematic imaginary and its impact on the industrial operation, commercial performance, and critical response to post-1997 Hong Kong cinema.

This thesis will address the production and reception of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, and its significance for the analytical understanding of the OCTS policy through a number of perspectives. First, in its newly-claimed PRC market, Hong Kong cinema tends to be censored or self-censored. The resulting "one movie, two versions" phenomenon illustrates how Hong Kong and the PRC collaborate economically on the basis of "one country" while, at the same time, they diverge politically under the "two systems." Second, the prominent presence of Mainland actresses in the thriving film co-productions is an indication of the changing dynamics in the Hong Kong-PRC relationship as a result of China's economic takeoff. However, in an effort to retain a

distinct local identity, some Hong Kong filmmakers are deliberately ignoring the lucrative PRC market in order to keep Hong Kong cinema unchanged. These “not for the PRC” films are instrumental in monitoring the fulfillment of the “no change in Hong Kong for fifty years” promise made by the OCTS arrangement. Furthermore, either through the cinematic portrayals of Macao and Taiwan, or through the industrial linkages to Singapore and Malaysia, Hong Kong cinema has demonstrated a variety of “Chineseness-es” outside the PRC.

The unshakable connections between Hong Kong cinema and Chinese diasporas have posed a serious challenge to the notion of equating “China” to the PRC as defined in the OCTS policy. Finally, the economic integration of Greater China has brought about the emergence of a pan-Chinese cinema mainly based on the Hong Kong martial arts genre. Taking advantage of their common history, cultural heritage and anti-imperialist Chinese nationalism, these pan-Chinese martial arts films have made a significant contribution to an imaginary “unified cultural China,” although the ultimate goal of the OCTS policy— the grand political reunification under the rule of the PRC — is still a dream yet to be fulfilled.

By addressing the complexity of the PRC’s “split reunification” with Hong Kong under the OCTS, this study challenges the simple dichotomy of “PRC socialism vs. Hong Kong capitalism,” probing overlapping concepts of “China”— the PRC, the Greater China or the imagined cultural China. Finally, it makes a broader contribution to research on “national” cinemas in the context of dynamic geo-political and socio-cultural change within regions and across the globe.

Chapter One

Introduction

Article 5:

The socialist system and policies shall not be practised in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years.

*THE BASIC LAW OF THE HONG KONG
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION OF
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA*

(Adopted on 4 April 1990)

This thesis employs a contextual and conjunctural analysis informed by cultural studies to capture the transformation of the Hong Kong cinema in the “one country, two systems” era since 1997. I will take post-1997 Hong Kong cinema as a major focus to examine its adjustments and changes in production and reception, as a response to the related cultural and economic policies made by both the local government of Hong Kong and the PRC Central Government, and most of all, the macro political policy of “one country, two systems.” Besides its concern with the cinema of Hong Kong, the main goal of this study is to contribute to the understanding

of the unique political formula of “one country, two systems” practised in Hong Kong from a culturally-oriented perspective.

In this introductory chapter, I will first elucidate the complexities and contingencies of the “one country, two systems” policy as the background to my research. Then I will propose a cultural studies approach to view the “one country, two systems” as a conjuncture. In this conjuncture, Hong Kong cinema is becoming precarious in terms of its cultural identity and in turn, it offers a fresh viewpoint for understanding this conjuncture. Finally, I will give an overview of the structure and content of the whole thesis.

1. Complex and Contingent “One Country, Two Systems” Policy

On the eve of the ten-year anniversary of Hong Kong’s political changeover and the establishment of the first Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Xinhua News Agency, the official press agency of the government of the PRC published a commentary entitled “‘One Country, Two Systems’ Works in Hong Kong.” In the article, the “one country, two systems” model was highly praised as an unprecedented policy in human history as a means for peaceful reunification of a nation. It stated, “[Hong Kong] it’s impressing the globe again to become a political wonderworks — a capitalist city thriving in a socialist country” (Xinhua News Agency, June 29, 2007). However, Hong Kong scholar Yiu-chung Wong holds a different opinion. In his book *“One Country, Two Systems” in Crisis: Hong Kong in Transformation since the Handover*, Wong (2004: 2) contends that “It [“one country, two systems”] is basically a void concept and its content is shaped by the shifting balance of forces interacting at each historical juncture or moment.” As in

Wong's book, and in many other academic studies on the "one country, two systems" model, this policy is usually considered from political, economic and legal perspectives. In this thesis, I will propose a cultural studies approach to the understanding of this political formula through the examination of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, particularly its production and reception in relation to the policies of both the central and local governments.

Crossing and combining the disciplines of cultural studies and film studies, this dissertation has two primary aims:

- to understand this "one country, two system" era of Hong Kong and the PRC as a peculiar cultural-historical conjuncture through the lens of Hong Kong cinema; and
- to explore the impact and influence of the "one country, two system" policy on Hong Kong cinema as a social, economic and cultural institution.

In short, this work takes post-1997 Hong Kong cinema as its subject and seeks to gain a critical understanding of the "one country, two system" policy from a culturally-oriented perspective. Moreover, taking into consideration the current worldwide concerns about the so-called "China's rise", the examination of Hong Kong, the former British colony, the most Westernised region under the governance of China (the PRC), will provide a point of reference for the understanding of China (the PRC) and its position in the world order influenced, if not totally defined by, the major capitalist countries in the West.

In fact, this work is initially motivated by my own confusion about the concept of

“China” as a PRC-born and raised Chinese. I used to equate the PRC with “China” according to the “one-China” policy held adamantly by the PRC. The PRC version of the “One China” principle claims that Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are all inalienable parts of that China — the PRC. However, under the “one country, two systems” formula with the presence of the newly returned Hong Kong as a capitalist SAR of the socialist PRC, this “split unity” of China first aroused my interest in the essence of the two systems behind the oversimplified division of “socialism vs. capitalism,” and the other “Chinese societies” outside Mainland China. The existence of these “capitalist Chinese societies,” such as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, outside the PRC has brought a notional concept to understand China as “one country” — “Greater China” (Harding, 1993; Uhalley, 1994; Callahan, 2004). In his book *Contingent States: Greater China and Transnational Relations*, Callahan (2004: xxi) argued that “Greater China is the product of a contingent network of relations in local, national, regional, global, and transnational space” and suggests a way of seeing Greater China as “heterotopias” which are “not the clean or pure norms of the social constructivists, they are multiple, and thus involved in struggle and politics” (p.22).

While this abstract concept of “Greater China” has first enriched my understanding of “China” as composed of the varied Chinese societies, another term “Cultural China” (Tu, 1991: 1) has caught my attention during the argument about naming Taiwan sporting team at the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics. Taiwan, which is also known as the Republic of China (ROC), refused to be referred as “Taipei, China” (*Zhongguo Taipei*), as in “Hong Kong, China,” the PRC eventually made a concession in referring to Taiwan’s Olympic team as “Chinese Taipei” (*Zhonghua Taipei*). This incident further stimulated me to ponder and probe the meaning of “China”, which can mean different things, as in *Zhonghua* (emphasizing the Chinese culture or civilization) and *Zhongguo*

(the Chinese state). To my understanding, Taiwan's preference of *Zhonghua* (as China in a cultural-historical sense) over *Zhongguo* (as China in the present political reality), has demonstrated a gesture of refusal to the PRC's proposal of reunification under "one country, two systems" like Hong Kong and Macao. On the other hand, the name "Chinese Taipei" still clearly indicates Taiwan's identification with "Cultural China". This selective identification "with cultural China without equating it with the state" (Lo, 2005: 38) echoes what Hong Kong scholar Kwai-Cheung Lo recognised as "a significant source of inspiration for the [pre-1997] Hong Kong film industry, allowing it to capture the hearts of diasporic Chinese worldwide" (Ibid). Therefore, through my examination of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, this thesis will set out to disentangle these overlapping concepts of "China" — the PRC, "Greater China" or "Cultural China" as an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's term (Anderson, [1983] 1991). In fact, these concepts have posed a serious challenge to the notion of equating "China" with the PRC as defined in the "one country, two systems" policy.

Besides my confusion about the concept of "China" as "one country," this thesis is also driven by the "cultural shock" I have experienced when I first learned the English phrase "Hong Kong handover". Since in Chinese language, the transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the PRC is referred to in a more sentimental expression "returning to the motherland" (*hui gui*), I used to be imbued with a national pride to regard this changeover of Hong Kong as a long-awaited "reunification" of both Hong Kong and the PRC. However, outside Mainland China, when I was surrounded by all the English books and media coverage about Hong Kong, I was surprised to find that this transfer of sovereignty has generally been referred to as "handover" in English. A slight feeling of reluctance seems to be implied in the word "handover" in relinquishing possession of the "oriental pearl of the Royal Crown" to a

third-world, authoritarian China. While China celebrates the reunification as a “wiping away” of the historical national shame caused by the unequal treaties after the Sino-British Opium War (1840-1842), I can sense a degree of uncertainty or even gloom pervading Hong Kong people through Hong Kong films, or in their English academic writing about the “handover.” This “handover complex,” as a resistance to the “reunification” with the PRC, is sometimes explicated by what is called the “1997 syndrome” or “China syndrome,” as in the book title *Hong Kong Cinema: Transition, Identity Search, and the 1997-Syndrome* (Scherz, 2005), and numerous other books or articles (Chan, 1997: 25; Teo, 1997: 308; Teo, 2007: 77).

Both of the words “reunification” of the PRC, and “handover” from the British point of view, tend to treat Hong Kong as a passive object, or even as a trophy. Therefore, sometimes the words “changeover” or “change” are used in describing the 1997 transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong (Lai, 2007:51; Leung, 1997: xiii). The words “changeover” or “change” redirect the focus back to Hong Kong without having any judgmental overtone. However, they also remind us of the “no change for fifty years” (*wu shi nian bu bian*) promise stipulated in the “one country, two systems” policy. How would Hong Kong remain unchanged after such a major political changeover, especially as part of the ever-changing PRC?

When “one country, two systems” was first introduced in the early 1980s, the PRC had just stepped out of decades of communist political movements and shifted its focus on economic development by starting the “reform and opening-up” process. In the early 1990s, after years of economic reform, the PRC adopted a market economy to replace its original planned economy model. In fact, since the 1984 signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the PRC has undergone tremendous changes by making four major

amendments to its current Constitution (adopted in December 1982). Besides the 1993 amendment which justifies the “socialist market economy,” the most recent amendment in 2004 clearly stated that there should be no encroachment on the lawful private property of citizens (China Today, 2004). Each of these Constitutional amendments has pushed the “socialism with Chinese characteristics” further away from the socialism of Mainland China at the time the “one country, two systems” policy was conceived. In this respect, the PRC’s evolution from Leninist socialism to quasi-capitalism, or so-called “post-socialism” (Berry, 2004; Zhang, 2004; McGrath, 2008), has first complicated the differentiation of the “two systems” adopted respectively by Hong Kong and Mainland China, and then challenged the possibility of keeping Hong Kong unchanged while being largely overwhelmed by the centripetal force toward “one country”. This change was based economically on Mainland China’s burgeoning consumer market, and culturally on the proximity and commonality of a shared Chinese historical legacy.

In fact, in the context of the PRC coming into the limelight as one of the most rapidly changing societies in world, Greater China witnessed an accelerated economic integration marked by both Hong Kong and Macao signing a Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Mainland China in 2003, and Taiwan signing the similar Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in June 2010. This economic integration has further challenged the already-contested notion of “two systems” as two separate precincts without encroaching on one another.

Generally speaking, the “one country, two systems” policy was initiated with the intention to bring Taiwan back into the “one country” to achieve the ultimate goal of “Grand Unity” (*Da Yi Tong*) of China. It is now using Hong Kong and Macao, the two

SARs, as trial sites to set up a model of this practice. On the one hand, the strategic, transitional “two systems” formula to achieve the ultimate goal of “one country” demonstrates a commitment to the thousand year old Confucian dogma of “Grand Unity.” On the other, it can be interpreted as a promise/compromise of PRC to maintain Hong Kong’s stability and prosperity by keeping it “unchanged” after the PRC had just stepped out of the shadow of Cultural Revolution and started to embark on its reform. No matter how or whether the ultimate goal of “Grand Unity” would be fulfilled, according to the Basic Law of Hong Kong, this interim “one country, two systems” policy may only last for fifty years. Eventually, this transitional “one country, two systems” era since 1997 will head towards a “one country, one system” — although it remains uncertain which or what system that would be judging by the ongoing reform of the PRC. Therefore, I maintain that this “one country, two systems” era should be understood as a complex and contingent conjuncture which deserves serious intellectual consideration.

2. A Cultural Studies Approach to the “One Country, Two Systems” Conjuncture

Taking into account all the complexities and contingencies regarding the “one country, two systems” policy, I propose to look at this era as a conjuncture which, as Lawrence Grossberg (2006: 5) contends, is “not a slice of time or a period but a moment defined by an accumulation/condensation of contradictions, a fusion of different currents or circumstances” or, as Stuart Hall (1988, as cited in Grossberg 2006: 5) puts it, “the complex historically specific terrain of a crisis which affects — but in uneven ways — a specific national-social formation as a whole”.

Stuart Hall had once mentioned in an interview that “It [Cultural Studies] has an intellectual vocation to produce a critical understanding of a conjuncture, a cultural-historical conjuncture” (Stuart Hall as cited in Grossberg, 2006: 4). Ien Ang ([1999] 2005: 482) also points out that “the distinctive intellectual currency and social utility of cultural studies research lies in its capacity for inducing conjunctural questioning.” The “one country, two systems” era can be regarded, in Lawrence Grossberg’s (2006: 4) words as:

a social formation as fractured and conflictual, along multiple axes, planes and scales, constantly in search of temporary balances or structural stabilities through a variety of practices and processes of struggle and negotiation.

In this respect, the “one country, two systems” conjuncture is the answer in my study to the primary question for cultural studies – “what is the conjuncture [that] we should address” (Grossberg, 2006: 5). With the promise that “the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years” (the Basic Law, Article 5) after the 1997 sovereignty transfer, the “one country, two systems” era is in fact temporary and transitional for both Hong Kong and the PRC. As “there are certain kinds of political struggle and possibility,” this “one country, two systems” conjuncture needs to be analysed and “understood as the attempt to establish a temporary balance or settlement in the field of forces” (Grossberg, 2010: 40).

Adopting a conjunctural analysis in my study, my next task is to look through the lens of Hong Kong cinema, to “get the balance right – between the old and the new (or, in Raymond Williams’ terms, the emergent, the dominant and the residual), between what is similar and what is different, between the organic and the conjunctural (and the

accidental)” (Grossberg, 2006: 5).

In his book *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Grossberg (2010: 41) contends that:

Conjunctural analysis focuses on the social formation as a complexly articulated unity or totality (that is nevertheless not an organic totality). Conjuncturalism looks to the changing configuration of forces that occasionally seek and sometimes arrive at a balance or temporary settlement. It emphasises the constant, overdetermined reconfiguration of a field producing only temporary stabilities.

With the goal to contribute to the critical understanding of the “one country, two systems” conjuncture, I take Hong Kong cinema, the important, if no longer major, constituent of the Hong Kong city brand, the social and cultural institution based on industry and commerce, as the chief subject of my study, to explore two research questions:

1. How is the real practice of “one country, two systems” as an unprecedented formula in human history reflected in the changing institution of Hong Kong cinema and its filmic imagination? and
2. How is Hong Kong cinema influenced by the policies, “one country, two systems” policy in general and other specific cultural, economic policies?

Embedding a textual analysis within contextual inquiry, this study will unravel the interplay between the reflection of the “one country, two systems” practice in the Hong Kong cinematic imaginary, and its impact on the industrial operation, commercial

performance, and critical response to post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. A key concern of this study is the industrial context in which post-1997 Hong Kong cinema was produced, distributed, exhibited and received. Combining industrial and historical research, which concerns the institutions and operations of the film industry and the effects of socio-political or cultural events, I will identify the major changes and tendencies in the production and reception of post-1997 HKC in the context and conjuncture of the transitional “one country, two systems” era towards the ultimate goal of “one country, one system,” which also brings Taiwan back into the “one country” and completes the course of reunification of China.

Generally speaking, in the British colonial era, Hong Kong cinema has long been taken as an exemplary commercial regional cinema which had enjoyed no direct government support either in the form of financial subsidies or import quotas. More importantly, as an export-oriented film industry, Hong Kong cinema has gained its fame as the “Hollywood of the East” in its heyday in the 1980s. However, since the mid-1990s, the Hong Kong film industry has undergone a significant decline for a series of interconnected reasons such as the poor-quality resulting from overproduction, Hollywood’s expansion to the Asian market, and the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis. In a sense, the year 1997 marks not only the political changeover for Hong Kong, but also a watershed for Hong Kong cinema to explore new overseas market and to change the traditional financing mode based on the Taiwanese and Southeastern Asian distributors’ investment through the practice of “pre-sale” (Lii, 1998: 114). In the post-changeover era, the contested status and intensified cultural politics in post- Hong Kong cinema are so complicated as to challenge film scholars’ critical assumptions, and to require expansion their intellectual horizons.

Since 1997, Hong Kong cinema has witnessed the emergence of three trends: internationalisation by emulating Hollywood; integration with Mainland China; and insistence on indigenous flavor. As “the local, the national and the global all meet in the dialogic space of the filmic text” (Lu & Yeh, 2005: 18), Hong Kong scholars have revealed a genuine concern for the Hong Kong “local” by posing questions such as, “what happened to the ‘local’ under the double hegemony of the national and the global? Is the local still relevant to Hong Kong cinema in a state of flux?” (Lee, 2009: 2). In the book *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: the Post-Nostalgic Imagination*, Hong Kong scholar Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009: 7) contends that:

In the post-1997 milieu,..... while the national and the local are being challenged by the transnational and the global, in Hong Kong the problematic of the local remains central to a wide spectrum of films and filmmakers...partly due to the as yet unanswered quest for identity – a local identity constituted not by some authentic essence but impurities and ambivalence at the very enunciation of the word.

Vivian P. Y. Lee focuses on the nostalgic imagination in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema to demonstrate how local cinema resorts to nostalgia to “make sense of the present” (Lee, 2009: 5), and claims her book to be “a story of how the local cinema has got by” (Ibid: 18). Different from Lee’s style of using the sociopolitical context to “help explain a specific quality [nostalgia] of Hong Kong films in the last decade” (Lee, 2009: 5), my thesis seeks to understand this context, the cultural-historical conjuncture through the practice of Hong Kong cinema. Or, in other words, I will approach the “one country, two systems” conjuncture through Hong Kong cinema as simultaneously a cultural

practice and a commercial enterprise.

With this contextual and conjunctural approach, post-1997 Hong Kong cinema will be understood “as a practice situated within its distinct social, economic and institutional contexts and shaped by the outcomes of particular cultural negotiations involving multiple agents and interests” (Ang, 2006: 187). I will identify a number of noteworthy phenomena concerning the production and/or reception of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema to address its significance for the analytical understanding of the “one country, two systems” policy. In an effort to capture the political significance of popular cultural practice, I will pay special attention to the articulation of “the ways in which concrete issues and problems are to be understood as complexly layered ‘intersections’ of various structural and conjunctural (economic, legal, political, historical, social, geographical ...) conditions of existence” (Ang 2006: 194). In this way, this study will not only contribute to the understanding of the sociopolitical situation in Hong Kong SAR and Mainland China co-existing under the “one country, two systems” policy, but also make a broader contribution to research on “national” cinemas in the context of dynamic geo-political and socio-cultural change within regions and across the globe.

3. Overview of the Thesis Structure and Content:

This thesis is composed of eight chapters including Introduction and Conclusion. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two will provide an intellectual context for the studies on Hong Kong cinema and an introduction to my research methods.

I will first summarise several book-length studies on Hong Kong cinema since the mid-1990s concerning their varied approaches to Hong Kong cinema. Special attention is

paid to their attitudes and opinions towards the historical event of the 1997 transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong which is of paramount importance to the overall themes of these books. Due to the short time span and the complex, ever-changing industrial conditions of Hong Kong cinema, research on the post-1997 Hong Kong cinema is mainly in the form of journal articles or chapters in books with a broader scope rather than just Hong Kong issues. I will give a more detailed account of the heated and still ongoing debates about the current strategies and uncertain future direction of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. The focal point of the debate is the ambivalence towards the expanding Mainland Chinese market which is becoming increasingly important to Hong Kong cinema while causing anxieties about retaining Hong Kong local identity or specificity. I will attempt to depict the trajectory of changing opinions towards Hong Kong cinema at different stages of its development in relation to the major events such as the PRC's entry into the WTO in 2001 and the implementation of the CEPA in 2004. My elaboration of this debate will provide a general picture of the precarious situation of post-1997 Hong Kong's identity facing the threat of being integrated into the PRC cinema or pan-Chinese cinema.

Chapters Three to Seven will each address a major phenomenon concerning the production or reception of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. Chapter Three will examine the "one movie, two versions" phenomenon in Hong Kong cinema's effort of tapping into the Mainland market under PRC censorship. I will explain that the multiple-version strategy is a long-time tradition of the export-oriented Hong Kong cinema, as it currently highlights the political divergence between the "two systems" despite of the increasing Hong Kong-PRC economic collaboration. I will challenge the oversimplified "Hong Kong cinema-as-victim" judgment by demonstrating the provocative side of certain Hong Kong films through their embedded political insinuations. The issue of

new media and film piracy will also be taken into consideration as it has resulted in the consumption dilemma in Mainland China between the theatrical censored version and pirated “authentic” version, and has influenced the creations by Hong Kong filmmakers as they began to self-censor for the sake of box-office revenue.

Chapter Four reflects on the prominent achievement of the Mainland actresses in the Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions winning the Best Actress Awards at the Hong Kong Film Awards for four consecutive years since the implementation of the CEPA in 2004. I will explore the vicissitudes of the three decades film co-production between Hong Kong and the PRC influenced by a series of reforms and policy changes in the PRC and in Taiwan. I will analyse the changing role, both on-screen and off-screen, of Mainland actresses in the male-dominated Hong Kong cinema as a reflection of the changing dynamism between Hong Kong-Mainland relationships. I will argue that Hong Kong cinema is undergoing a reconfiguration caused by the overwhelming post-CEPA co-production trend, which has resulted in a “local-turn” in defining Hong Kong films as only the non-co-produced, local Hong Kong-market focused films.

These small number of non-co-produced Hong Kong films, together with the pre-CEPA films which are not made for the Mainland market in the first place, will be discussed in Chapter Five. I will classify these films as being three stages according to their different production and marketing strategies. First is the “going global” strategy of increasing the film budgets on visual effects such as computer generated images (CGI) in an effort to emulate Hollywood. However, this expansive “going global” strategy has in fact, pushed Hong Kong cinema closer to the ever-growing Mainland market for cheap labour, financing and risk-sharing. Towards this “going national/PRC” trend, the changing attitude from reluctance to reconciliation is revealed through those

gangster/crime and ghost/horror Hong Kong films which are prohibited in the Mainland market. More recently, as the big-budgeted films are inevitably co-productions, a number of medium-to low-budgeted Hong Kong films targeting mainly the small local market, are seen as a way of making the films “become Hong Kong (again).” These films are either supported by local SAR government subsidisation or are Hong Kong-related life stories spiced with sex and violence as a selling point. The significance of these “local productions” lies in that they have demonstrated the perseverance of Hong Kong (filmmakers) in preserving their own cultural specificity.

Besides the notable concerns over the Hong Kong-Mainland relationship, post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has also displayed a variety of “Chineseness-es” among Greater China through its cinematic portrayal of, or industrial linkage with, the Chinese diasporas. Chapter Six will first juxtapose the filmic images of Portuguese Macao as a gloomy violent city and Macao SAR as a prosperous, dazzling gaming resort, through detailed analysis of a number of Macao-themed Hong Kong films. This sharp contrast will reflect not only the “exemplary” practice of the “one country, two systems” in Macao in terms of its compliance under the PRC rule, but also the changing ideology of Hong Kong filmmakers after years of engaging in the co-production mode. Then I will illustrate the Republic of China (ROC)/Taiwan’s political claim “one China, different interpretations” through three Taiwan politics-themed Hong Kong films. The PRC holds adamantly that there is only one China encompassing Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, and that the PRC under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is the sole representation of this China. However, Taiwan sees itself – the ROC as the only legitimate political regime for “China”, including Mainland China now under the control of the PRC. Moreover, within Taiwan Island, the competition between the pro-“One-China” Kuomintang (KMT, or the Chinese Nationalist Party) and the pro-

independent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has further complicated the sovereignty dispute across the Taiwan Strait since 1949. These three Hong Kong films have explicitly covered Taiwan political issues such as the anti-communist “white terror” in the 1950s, the decades’ long martial law, the political corruption under the authoritarian rule of the KMT in early 1990s, and the 2004 presidential election farce in a post-martial law, democratic Taiwan. These films reveal Hong Kong’s neutral stand between the PRC and the ROC, while a firm belief in the “One China” principle and an anti-secession attitude is also demonstrated. Finally, Hong Kong cinema’s industrial connection to the Chinese-language film industries in Singapore and Malaysia will show how these diasporas affiliated in different forms to the common Chinese culture.

Last, in Chapter Seven, I will elucidate how Hong Kong martial arts films have evolved into a de-territorialised pan-Chinese cinema for (and by) a “culturally unified” China. I will give a detailed account of the emergence of the pan-Chinese blockbuster in the form of historical martial arts films, and analyse the three strategies of bridging the socio-cultural differences among different Chinese societies: the use of historical settings to screen an ancient China as an imagined homeland; the exploitation of shared cultural heritage by adaptation of the Chinese literary classics; and the marketing of anti-Japanese or anti-imperialist nationalism in the new *kung fu* craze. The Hong Kong director/producer Peter Chan Ho-sun and *kung fu* actor Donnie Yen will be discussed in detail respectively as a pioneer figure of pan-Chinese cinema model, and the new *kung fu* icon after Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, rising in this pan-Chinese cinema era. The two classical Chinese novels *Romance of Three Kingdoms* (*San Guo Yan Yi*) and *Strange Stories From a Chinese Studio* (*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*) will also be examined as the two most adapted classics. Special attention will be paid to the controversies and compromise involved in the production and reception of these adapted films. Moreover,

Hong Kong's presence in the most recent award-winning *kung fu* films will be discussed in an unanswered question "Is this a final curtain or a resurgence of Hong Kong *kung fu* films" in the prevailing pan-Chinese cinema model. I argue that new research is required on the future development of Hong Kong cinema in order to answer these questions.

These seemingly fragmented discussion on the post-1997 different phenomenon or controversies will be addressed in a logical sequence throughout the thesis, as to contribute to the overall understanding of Hong Kong cinema at/and the "one country, two systems" conjuncture. The first three chapters (Three to Five) will focus on the changing forces and temporary balance between the "two systems" while the last two (Chapter Six and Seven) will challenge the controversial definition of "one country." The discussion starts from the more obvious difference between the two systems as demonstrated in the "two versions" phenomena (Chapter 3), to the gradual integration of film industries of Hong Kong and mainland China is the epitome of "one country" tendency (Chapter 4), while the efforts of trying to keep Hong Kong cinema unchanged is discussed as a manifestation of Hong Kong's one-sided emphasis on "two systems" (Chapter 5). The aforementioned concept of "Greater China" will be explored through discussion of diasporic Hong Kong films set in Macao, Taiwan, and Southeast Asian Chinese communities (Chapter 6) and the concept of "Cultural China" will be examined through the newly-emerged pan-Chinese cinema (Chapter 7). In fact, this all-encompassed approach to Hong Kong cinema is determined by the conjunctural model I have adopted for this work. To quote Grossberg (2010: 43) again, "conjunctural analysis has to look at the non-necessary articulations of the socio-material, the lived-experiential, and the ontological realities of the conjuncture."

Besides the discussion of concrete issues and case studies concerning post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, each of the chapters will be led by a framing question to provide a research background or intellectual context for the main topic of the chapter. More importantly, the discussion of these framing questions will justify the significance and relevance of the phenomenon to my primary aim of understanding the “one country, two systems” conjuncture. These questions include:

- **Why should we care about the cut version?** (Chapter Three) will focus on the alternative versions of Hong Kong films in the Mainland market because of the censorship in order to examine the social discrepancies between the “two systems;”
- **Thriving co-production: Is Hong Kong cinema becoming less “Hong Kong”?** (Chapter Four) will pertain to the changing dynamism on the Hong Kong-Mainland (capitalism-socialism) relationship through discussion on the anxieties over Hong Kong cinema losing its local flavour in the process of co-production with the Mainland;
- **Is transnational Hong Kong cinema becoming “half PRC, half local”?** (Chapter Five) will look at the changing definition of Hong Kong cinema as the non-co-productions focusing on its local market differentiate themselves from the PRC-oriented co-productions as resistance to “one country,” and emphasise “remaining unchanged under ‘two systems’ arrangement;”
- **Can the “Chineseness” of Hong Kong cinema reinforce its specificity?** (Chapter Six) will argue that Hong Kong cinema has demonstrated multi-Chineseness-es belonging to Greater China, through its unshakable connection to the Chinese

diasporas such as Macao, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. The introduction of the concept of “Greater China” through Hong Kong cinema indeed challenges the simplified notion of “one country”/ “one China” referring only to the PRC.

- **Pan-Chinese cinema: a fourth entry under the rubric of “Chinese cinemas”?** (Chapter Seven) will delineate the academic taxonomy of Chinese cinema(s) as composed of three territorially-based ones of the PRC, Hong Kong and Taiwan cinemas. I argue that the recent emerging pan-Chinese cinema as a de-territorialised cinema can be regarded as a fourth form of Chinese cinema(s). Developed from the binary Hong Kong-Mainland co-production, this pan-Chinese cinema, based on the imaginary unified “cultural China,” is symbolically an alternative to the political reunification under the rule of the PRC – the yet-to-fulfilled goal of “one country, two systems” policy.

Led by these framing questions, the five chapters (Chapters Three to Seven) of the thesis will provide a comprehensive theoretical and practical overview of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema in terms of its production and reception and its interactive relationship with the “one country, two systems” policy. This thesis will contribute to the understanding of more than the situation of Hong Kong (cinema), the PRC and other Chinese diasporas in the unprecedented “one country, two systems” conjuncture, but also serve as a springboard for future research on Hong Kong cinema, Chinese-language cinema(s) and “one country, two systems” policy. Most importantly, this thesis will contribute to the academic fields of cinema studies and cultural studies as a cross-disciplinary project.

Chapter Two

Hong Kong Cinema Seeking a New Identity:

Literature Review and Research Methods

The identity shift of Hong Kong from a British colony to a Special Administrative Region of the PRC, has had a great impact on academic studies of Hong Kong cinema. Most of the studies have revealed some kind of eagerness to describe or prescribe identity for Hong Kong cinema, be it a unique colonial identity, or a cultural identity in more complex national, transitional and global context. This chapter will provide a review of the literature on Hong Kong cinema since the watershed year 1997 and elucidate how research efforts have been directed toward seeking a new identity for post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. Finally, based on the analysis of the existing literature, I will describe and explain my research methods in detail in this interdisciplinary study of Hong Kong cinema at the “one country, two systems” conjuncture.

Around the turn of the 1997 transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong, numerous book-length studies were published about Hong Kong cinema history and its achievements (Fonoroff, 1997; Hammond & Wikins, 1997; Dannen & Long, 1997; Teo, 1997; Wood, 1998; Stokes & Hoover, 1999). These books mainly cover the pre-1997 period by trying to mark the end of the colonial era. Among these books, Stephen Teo’s (1997) *Hong*

Kong Cinema: the Extra Dimension is perhaps the most commonly used history of regional Hong Kong cinema as it covers the period from the first films made in Hong Kong to the end of the 1990s. Besides tracing the industry back to its early association with Shanghai, (featuring its heyday in 1980s), when talking about the last two decades of the twentieth century, they all inevitably address the anxiety caused by the coming 1997 political changeover and the uncertainty about the “one country, two systems” era which found expression in the book title *City on Fire* (Stokes & Hoover, 1999). Moreover, in a somewhat sensational way, Ackbar Abbas (1997) had described Hong Kong facing the changeover as “a space of disappearance” (p.69). In his book *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, which generally about Hong Kong culture and of which cinema is a major component, Abbas (1997: 69) contends that after the transfer of sovereignty from the U.K. to the PRC:

In a space of disappearance, in the unprecedented historical situation that Hong Kong finds itself in of being caught between two colonialities (Britain’s and China’s), there is a desperate attempt to clutch at images of identity.

In contrast to the obsession about a unique colonial Hong Kong identity among the above-mentioned works, those books published right after the change of political regime incline to view Hong Kong cinema in a broader transnational cultural and political context, besides providing a comprehensive chronology of the Hong Kong film industry. These books begin to reconsider the cultural identity of Hong Kong cinema as in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Fu & Desser, 2000), and take up the issue of Hong Kong as “A Dis/Appearing City” (Yau, 2001: 15) in the context of globalisation and potential/possible “nationalisation” as part of the PRC. Placing Hong Kong cinema in the context of globalisation, Esther Yau’s book *At Full Speed: Hong*

Kong Cinema in a Borderless World emphasises economics as a defining factor in shaping the local Hong Kong film industry and culture (Yau, 2001). Unlike the above-mentioned works by Fu and Desser (2000) and Yau (2001) which have taken a cultural-historical or industrial-based approach to Hong Kong cinema, American film scholar David Bordwell's (2000) focuses on film art itself and constantly compares it to Hollywood. His book *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* has been widely used as textbook in American universities to introduce Hong Kong cinema as an amazing commercial success outside Hollywood through its alternative aesthetic style and genres. These book-length studies on mainly pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema from different perspectives indeed give a good guideline as to what needs to be taken into consideration in my examination of Hong Kong cinema in the "one country, two systems" era.

Besides the books strictly confined to the studies of Hong Kong cinema as an individual quasi-national cinema, there are also books on Chinese cinema as a whole which include Hong Kong cinema as part of the transnational Chinese cinema(s) (Lu, 1997; Zhang, 2002a & 2004, Yang, 2003; Berry, 2005; Xu, 2006). The "triangulation of competing national/local Chinese cinemas" (Lu, 1997: 3) in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan leads the researchers to enlarge the scope of their study of Chinese-language films as a whole under the notion of Greater China (Lu & Yeh, 2005; Berry & Farquhar, 2006). Both *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (Lu & Yeh, 2005) and *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (Berry & Farquhar, 2006) reexamine the concept of "national cinema" and expound how transnational Chinese cinemas could be understood as "a larger arena connecting differences, so that a variety of regional, national, and local specificities impact upon each other in various types of relationships ranging from synergy to contest" (Berry & Farquhar, 2006: 5). Therefore,

prominent themes of contemporary cultural studies, the issues of the national, the transnational, and the global and cultural identity have emerged, standing at the intersection of Chinese films and post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. As Lu & Yeh (2005: 21) noted, these themes, “provide prime material and provocative cases for scholars of world cinema to rethink the crucial yet perplexed relationship between cinema and nation.”

Probably due to the short time span and the obvious decline of Hong Kong cinema in terms of quantity, so far there has been only one book-length English work on post-1997 Hong Kong cinema – *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: the Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Lee, 2009), which I briefly introduced in Chapter One. Lee’s work has provided detailed textual analysis of selected Hong Kong films (without strict differentiation of co-production with the Mainland and non-co-productions). These films are classified into three parts according to thematic categories, namely, “Time and Memory,” “Schizophrenia, Amnesia, and Cinephilia” and “In and Out” (Lee, 2009: vii). On the whole, the book centers on the theme of the “post-nostalgic imagination” – a term coined “in an attempt to better describe and understand the post-handover period [that] refers to nostalgia in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema” (Ibid: 6). According to Lee (2009: 6), in the post-1997 Hong Kong films:

nostalgia is transformed by an active revisioning of past visual codes that bespeak not a break with the past, but a need to embrace the nostalgic in new ways, that is, new treatment of old themes and new configurations of tried images to speak to the realities of the present.

In a sense, V. Lee’s book is a retrospective of Hong Kong’s first decade under the PRC

rule though her attention remains on the articulation of local identity in the post-1997 Hong Kong films (V. Lee, 2009). In the concluding chapter, V. Lee (2009: 217) reveals a great concern due to “a greater presence of ‘Mainland elements’ in Hong Kong productions,” and ends her book with the argument that:

the ‘dual citizenship’ of Hong Kong cinema is still to be cherished as a new attribute of the local, whose global ambitions also necessitate a firmer grounding in the pan-Chinese/pan-Asian cohort, an intersection between home and world.

Here, V. Lee’s expression of “the ‘dual citizenship’ of Hong Kong cinema,” is similar to what I will discuss in this thesis— a distinct Hong Kong specificity guaranteed by the “two systems” arrangement (Chapter Five) among the overwhelming northbound trend of Hong Kong-Mainland co-production (Chapter Four). My approach is to take this “Hong Kong specificity” as a parameter in order to monitor the fulfillment of the “keeping Hong Kong unchanged” promise (as in Chapter Five) and as a testimony challenging the notion of equating China with the PRC (as in Chapter Six).

In fact, the discussion on post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has mainly focused on its relationship to the newly-claimed Mainland Chinese market. Due to the changing industrial conditions and, especially since 1997, an extensive debate has been going on through a number of timely journal articles or book chapters pertaining to the uncertain future direction of Hong Kong cinema, particularly in relation to the Mainland China factor and its identity as an individual national/regional cinema.

In his article “Local and Global Identity: Whither Hong Kong Cinema?” Stephen Teo

(2000: n.pag.) argues that “the term ‘national cinema’ is probably a misnomer when applied to Hong Kong.” Teo prefers to view Hong Kong as an “ethnic cinema” as he maintains that “it (Hong Kong) is a Special Autonomous Region of China, and its cinema is still quite distinct from that of Mainland China’s” (ibid). Despite his mistaken use of “autonomous” for “administrative,” which downplays the impact of the central government on Hong Kong, he overlooks the importance of the changing Hong Kong-PRC relationship after the reunification. Teo (2000: n.pag.) emphasised the global identity in Hong Kong cinema, and argues that, after the political changeover, “the urge of the Hong Kong film industry to expand into the international market, to find a market beyond the traditional Chinese-speaking market, leads to the possibility of a construction of global identity.”

As he establishes his general principle about Hong Kong by regarding it as “a meeting point of East and West,” Teo (2000: n.pag.) puts forward the argument that the most viable model by which to construct the global identity of Hong Kong cinema is “the co-production model which tries to blend and balance cultural elements from both sides [which] appears invariably flawed due to the need to juggle both sides.” He believes that an outcome of the co-production between east and west would be a specific global identity in Hong Kong cinema being manifest “as a concept of multiculturalism within Hong Kong cinema itself” (ibid). As a Malaysian-Chinese himself, Teo (2000: n.pag.) highlights how the history of Hong Kong cinema “geared itself to servicing the overseas Chinese community — the Chinese diaspora,” and emphasised “the identity of the overseas Chinese” factor in “consider(ing) or construct (ing) the identity of Hong Kong cinema”. He firmly believes that beyond “the transnationalism of the Overseas Chinese community, Hong Kong cinema is pursuing a global market and is evolving a global identity in the process” (Teo, 2000: n.pag.). The Mainland China factor in

deciding the future direction of Hong Kong cinema was almost ignored at this stage.

After the PRC succeeded in entering the World Trade Organisation in 2001, Teo started to pay attention to the role that Mainland China might play in the future development of Hong Kong cinema, although his attitude remained skeptical at the stage. In his article “Post-’97 Hong Kong Cinema Crisis and Its After-effects,” Teo (2002: 49) raised questions as to “how Hong Kong would deal with censorship and restrictions?”; “How will Hong Kong maintain its separate identity?” and “Will China democratise or will Hong Kong become more and more like China?” Despite the foreboding “China factor”, Teo (ibid) still contended that “though Hong Kong’s destiny lies with China, its integration with the mainland still seems a long way off.”

However, the integration of Hong Kong cinema and Mainland cinema happened far much sooner than Teo had expected, and it is “an exemplary case study for understanding the tension between nationalisation and globalisation in the post-1997 Hong Kong-China relationship” (Pang 2002a: 65). In her book chapter “The Global-National Position of Hong Kong Cinema in China” for the collection entitled *Media in China: Consumption, Content and Crisis* (Donald et. al., 2002), Pang (2002a: 63) noted that Hong Kong was begging for “the status of a national product” for its films to be distributed in the Mainland. Sharing Teo’s skepticism about the “savior” role played by the Mainland market to rejuvenate Hong Kong film industry, Pang (2002a: 63) also points out that the “‘national’ status” is double-edged. While the Mainland market is crucial, “the unique identity of Hong Kong cinema may easily be swallowed up by the consumption needs of the mainland”.

Although some Hong Kong filmmakers have begun to experiment in “juggling with

Chinese audience, censorship and piracy to decode the mainland market” (Pang 2002a: 63), the director Johnnie To Kei-Fung, and his 1996-founded *Milkyway Image* production company, started to draw film critics’ attention as he claimed “to plan and market his films with an unambiguous Hong Kong identity” (Pang, 2007: 425), making him distinctive as an indigenous force resisting the temptation of the Mainland market. Long before the publication of the book *Director in Action: Johnnie To and Hong Kong Action Film* by Stephen Teo (2007), Pang (2002b) had written an article “Masculinity in Crisis: Films of *Milkyway Image* and Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema” which reviews changes in male representation in the early *Milkyway Image* films, in contrast with the confidence and aggressiveness of 1980’s Hong Kong gangster and action movies. She identifies two crucial themes — “entrapment and powerlessness” (Pang, 2002b: 326) — and points out that the films were “full of anxiety and disturbance,” and that “the male characters are often in a state of insecurity and fear,” which is due to the so-called “June 4th pathological complex” (Law, 2006: 387), and which has been constantly mentioned in the studies of Hong Kong cinema. Questioning a political interpretation of *Milkyway Image* debut *Too Many Ways to be Number One*, Pang (2002b) argues that what “the film reveals is a philosophical exploration of individuals’ freedom of choice,” (p.329) and, as for “the physical or psychological mobility difficulties,” she takes them as “conditioned by the double gestures of the films’ awareness of the cinematic tradition and their ultimate refusal to start anew” (p.337). In the first few years of the 21st century, Johnnie To was regarded as the flag bearer of Hong Kong ideology in post-1997 era, and the development of his career is a demonstration of a Hong Kong filmmaker struggling between the two systems (Codelli, et. al, 2001; Davis & Yeh, 2001; Pang, 2002a; Pun, 2006; Teo, 2007).

However, although some Hong Kong filmmakers like Johnnie To were still reluctant to

change at this stage, the Hong Kong cinema did. Since the success of *Infernal Affairs* (I, II, III; 2003), the Hong Kong film industry started to attempt ambitious, high concept, blockbuster filmmaking (Leary, 2003 & 2004; Lie, 2007; Pang, 2007; Zhao, 2007). With the implementation of the CEPA in 2004, the Hong Kong films finally fulfilled Hong Kong's desire for "national status" through Hong Kong-Mainland co-production but, as predicted by Pang (2002a), seemed to have lost their unique identity in the Mainland market. Moreover, since the average budget for a single movie has increased sharply, the overall output of Hong Kong films, including co-productions, remains very low at about fifty titles per year, in contrast to the peak of about 300 films per year in the early 1990s. Besides the quantity decline in Hong Kong cinema, in the first couple of years after the CEPA implementation, both the Hong Kong local audience and the audience from the Mainland accused Hong Kong films of quantitatively losing their unique Hong Kong flavor and becoming more "Chinese" (from Mainland China), which is regarded as a form of inferior cinema.

Consequently, the heated debate over Hong Kong cinema concerning Hong Kong-Mainland co-production has reached its climax within the first few years of post-CEPA era. The Beijing-based scholar Weifang Zhao's Chinese articles "Mainland and Hong Kong: Problems in the interaction of Film Industry" (2005), and "The Enlightenment of Hong Kong Film Industry" (2008), addressed the issue from a Mainland perspective, and focused on the impact of the Hong Kong film industry on the Mainland one. In his article "Hong Kong cinema: The *Dapian* [high concept blockbuster] Strategy after the Peril" (in Chinese), Zhao (2007) advocates that Hong Kong filmmakers compromise with Mainland censorship and self-adjustment to the needs of the Mainland market, as he believes that the Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced *Dapian* (major blockbuster) is a viable solution for the present predicament of both Hong Kong and Mainland cinemas.

Although sounding over-optimistic and even orthodox PRC, Zhao's positive view about the potential of *Dapian* has proven plausible, judging from the box-office performances and the popularity of those high-budget historical martial arts films which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Seven. Moreover, these Chinese blockbusters based on the Hong Kong-Mainland co-production model have soon attracted interest from other Chinese-language film industries in Taiwan and Singapore. Their participation in a sense elevated the binary Hong Kong-Mainland co-production to a larger-scaled pan-Chinese cinema model (see my discussion in Chapter Seven).

This unexpected phenomenon has drawn the attention of Stephen Teo (2008: 341), who had once been skeptical about the co-production mode, and acknowledges that "the Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese cinemas, two historically separate cinemas [are] increasingly being integrated through economic cooperation and co-production." However, Teo (2008: 341) also argues that this integration is a process "facilitated by political imperatives." Similarly, Laikwan Pang (2007: 424) regards the *Dapian* (blockbuster) phenomenon as a "utilitarian nationalisation characterizing post-1997 Hong Kong." She argues that "other than the production of major blockbusters to confront Hollywood head-on, another survival tactic of smaller film industries in the age of global cinema is the production of smaller-budget, place-based 'minor cinema'" (ibid: 419-420). Pang maintains that, in the case of Hong Kong cinema, "the local is at the core of the transnational" (2007: 427), and that, while Hong Kong is no longer prominent as a production site, it "begins to play a more important financing and facilitating role in the new Chinese and new Asian cinemas, while a small but core local cinema continues to serve identification" (2007: 414).

This facilitator assessment is shared by Singapore scholar Kean Fan Lim (2006: 337),

as he states that “politico-economic developments in China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia are instrumental in developing Hong Kong as a premier filmmaking centre,” and “Hong Kong-based filmmakers have to weave new cross-scalar production networks and target new markets so as to remain competitive.” Since the burgeoning Mainland market is the primary new market for both Hong Kong and PRC cinemas, or cinemas from other Chinese-speaking or Chinese-cultural influenced cinemas, the liberation and reform of the PRC film industry and film regulation becomes the chief concern for Hong Kong cinema to take advantage of its transnational background and its new facilitator role. Yeh and Davis (2008: 38) conducted a timely research on the PRC film marketisation reform through a case study on the China Film Group Corporation – the PRC state-owned media conglomerate “responsible for carrying out state policy, including propaganda functions, cultivation of markets and co-production development.” Through their study of the history, mandate and current activities, as well as the more recent post-CEPA co-production strategy of the China Film Group, Yeh and Davis (2008: 48) conclude:

Chinese marketisation has adopted the blockbuster functions of high budget tent-pole spectacles, but it also cleaves to a quite narrow range of subjects and styles. Reasons for this are both economic and political. *Dapian* are entertainment pictures, with astounding attractions and booming consumerism; and they sell stories and ideas inclined strongly toward national glorification, as prescribed by CFG in order to find entry into the marketplace. In itself this is unremarkable, but when such films are inevitably successful, the market speaks: it is made to say ‘serve the people’, as the Communist motto goes. In this way **hypernationalist** *dapian* and the market are a mutually reinforcing circle. [emphasis added]

Yeh and Davis (2008: 49) employ the notion of “a hyper-national state cinema in the making” to refer to the current trend of Mainland market-oriented historical martial arts blockbusters in order to highlight the PRC political imperative behind it. In Chapter Seven, I will explore this trend from a cultural perspective as a way to promote pan-Chinese identity in the present division predicament of Greater China, though undeniably, the promotion of “cultural China” has gained its approval — even support — from the PRC because of the ultimate goal of political reunification.

Generally speaking, the studies of Hong Kong cinema can't avoid the subjects of the 1997 transfer of sovereignty and the post-changeover Hong Kong-PRC relationship, especially with the economic takeoff of the PRC and Hong Kong's growing dependence on the Mainland market. Based on the previous studies and, particularly, the academic debates on the development and transformation of Hong Kong cinema, and most importantly, its identity crisis brought by the changeover, this thesis endeavors to provide a timely critical analysis of Hong Kong cinema at the “one country, two systems” conjuncture. The films discussed have mainly been released in the period from 1997 to 2011, while many old Hong Kong films will also be addressed for comparison or as referential texts. As the film industry is an ever-changing field, like the reform and policies of the PRC, this thesis will serve as a transitional study of Hong Kong cinema, Chinese-language cinema(s), and the “one country, two systems” policy and provide some guidance for future studies on these subjects.

As I have explicitly pointed out in the introduction, this thesis will adopt an interdisciplinary approach associated with both cinema and cultural studies. In

order to highlight the conjunctural features which makes post-1997 Hong Kong cinema a special case to understand the “one country, two systems” arrangement, more flexible and maybe somewhat unconventional research methods are employed in this work. For example, in order to shed light on the “one movie, two versions” phenomenon which reflects the discrepancy between the “two systems,” besides watching the officially screened versions in the Mainland Chinese theaters, I have to obtain DVDs (copyrighted from Hong Kong or pirated in the Mainland) of these films and sometimes even the downloaded digital files as this is the real situation of the dissemination of Hong Kong films in mainland China. I have undertaken most of the almost frame by frame comparison of the different film versions myself, and have personally checked those more general differences in plot which are discovered by films audiences and posted online.

As I will elaborate later in Chapter 3, most of the Hong Kong filmmakers refuse to acknowledge the “two versions,” no matter it is because of their insistence of artistic integrity or their commercial and legal concerns. So rather than doing interviews myself, I choose to use secondary materials collected from media coverage, official film websites, websites of the production companies and even personal blogs. Through my research, I will be very careful about discriminating about opinions and facts and checked the available data and statistics by consulting yearbooks and government media releases.

Throughout this qualitative research about Hong Kong cinema, I endeavor to collect and analyse unstructured information and to understand phenomena, extract meanings and reorganize them by themes such as co-productions with the Mainland and diasporic Hong Kong films, etc. The originality of this research lies in its scope

in encompassing textual, contextual, socio-historical, and political concerns post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, which contribute to the understanding of a unprecedented conjuncture under the “one country, two systems” policy.

Having introduced the social and intellectual context to my work and my research methods, in the following chapter, I will start with the “one movie, two versions” phenomenon which has greatly bothered the Hong Kong filmmakers and the Mainland audience watching Hong Kong films at cinema theatres. Through the examination of the cause and impact of this phenomenon, Chapter Three aims to provide a general picture of the social discrepancy between the two newly reunified territories— Hong Kong and Mainland China.

Chapter Four

Rise of “Kong Girl” in Co-Productions:

Mainland Actresses Reconfiguring Hong Kong Cinema

In the previous chapter I have discussed the differences and conflicts between the “two systems” through the “two versions” phenomenon of Hong Kong films in its newly-claimed Mainland China market. In this chapter, my chief subject is the cooperation of the two regions. The topic will be illustrated through Hong Kong cinema’s gradual integration with the Mainland Chinese cinema in the post-CEPA era since 2004 in the form of cross-border film co-production.

However, the “Mainlandisation” of Hong Kong cinema has further challenged the post-colonial Hong Kong identity as being “re-colonised” rather than “decolonised” as many scholars have expressed such concerns in papers like *Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-Writing in the 1990s* (Chow, 1992), *Schizophrenic Hong Kong: Postcolonial Identity Crisis in the Infernal Affairs Trilogy* (Choy, 2007) and the book *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong* (Carroll, 2005). As noted by Ciecko (2006: 170) “Handover has caused ruptures in an atypical paradigmatic relationship -- more advanced than its coloniser, China”, Hong Kong is positioned paradoxically in-between the colonised and colonisers through its “colonial

cultivation of a ‘modern Chinese’” (Wong, 2002: 143). In the integrating process of the two cinema systems, the commercially mature film industry of Hong Kong has assumed the role of mentoring or facilitating the Mainland Chinese cinema, which is only recently out of a planned economy since the 1990s. This phenomenon has in some way served as an illustration of the assertion made by the last British Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten (1998, as cited in Wong, 2002: 157) that Hong Kong is a “paradigm for the world of what China as a whole could become” which is a valid statement in terms of China’s present efforts to embrace Western modernity to connect to the global economy.

The key concern of the cinema integration process through Hong Kong-Mainland film co-production will be explored against the backdrop of the prolonged and “zigzagging” reform of the mainland Chinese film industry, from totally state-owned institution towards privatisation and commercialisation, since the PRC adopted a market economy in 1993. The chapter attempts to delineate the transformation trajectory of the Hong Kong film industry in the “one country, two systems” era, as it parallels the reform of the Mainland Chinese film industry, and to disentangle the changing power relations behind the “two becoming one” integration. All the while, Hong Kong identity is problematised in the industrial, economic reconfiguration embedded in the post-1997 new social, political configuration.

This accelerated integration is much in evidence in the avalanche of Hong Kong-Mainland film co-productions, involving the role of Mainland actresses in those Hong Kong led co-produced movies that served as the wheels of this co-production vehicle. “Kong Girl” is a phrase I have coined to refer to those minor supporting roles assigned to mainland actresses in the masculine-dominant Hong Kong movies (perhaps like the

“Bond Girl” in James Bond series). However, as Mainland China has become the centre of gravity in Chinese-language film consumption, the Hong Kong film industry is witnessing a general trend of “going up north” in terms of capital, talent and subject matter as well. Thus, the role of “Kong Girl” has expanded greatly in co-productions and risen from obscurity to the centre stage of the integration of the once widely different two regional cinemas of Hong Kong and Mainland China. Starting with the co-produced movies and functioning as the ‘token’ participation of the Mainland, these actresses, both on and off the silver screen, serve as a representation of the Mainland film industry in an ardent marketisation reform. Thus these actresses have started functioning as the stepping stone for the reform, as well as the hallmark of the integration through co-production. I will elaborate this function shift through discussions of the changing modes of Hong Kong-Mainland film co-production over its thirty-year history, the changes in the filmic representations of Mainland women in Hong Kong movies, and the more recent trend of Mainland film workers becoming Hong Kong residents and Hong Kong filmmakers relocating their studios to Beijing.

Thriving Co-Production: Hong Kong Cinema Becoming Less “Hong Kong”?

The extensive northbound expedition of Hong Kong cinema began in 2004 when the CEPA took effect and gave a boost to the Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced films. This is because since then, the co-productions are regarded as domestic products, and also not only exempt from the limited foreign movie import quota in the Mainland, but also enjoy a much higher share of box office revenue. According to the Vice President of the China Film Co-production Corporation, Mr. Miao Xiaotian, from the 1997 changeover to the year 2002, there were fewer than ten films per year co-produced by Hong Kong and Mainland China, and the number rose to 26 in 2003 and 32 in the following year

(Xi, 2007). In 2006, 39 out of a total of 52 local films screened in Hong Kong theatres were co-productions with Mainland China. The proportion of co-produced films shown in the Hong Kong local market has risen from about 13 per cent in 1997 to 75 per cent in 2006 (Chinafilm.com, 2007. Rita Lau, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development of Hong Kong SAR, has also revealed that the box office revenue for Hong Kong co-produced films in the Mainland market had jumped from 200 million RMB in 2003 to 520 million in 2004, and rose to 1.5 billion in 2007 (jrj.com, 2009). After the industrial downturn started in the mid-1990s and the severe effects of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the Hong Kong film industry is, in fact, now undergoing resurgence in the newly-acquired Mainland market.

Despite the fact that there is still general concern with the possibility of mainland censorship, obvious pecuniary benefits have propelled the expansion of co-production. These have brought another challenge to Hong Kong cinema—the dimming characteristics of Hong Kong as a presence in the films themselves. As a savvy market-oriented film industry, Hong Kong cinema is now witnessing a “mainlandisation” trend in terms of movie subjects, settings, and casting. In 2009, the big budget co-produced *kung fu* film, a biography of Bruce Lee’s mentor, *Ip Man* (Ye Wen, 2008), won the Best Film Award in the 28th Hong Kong Film Awards, and another co-produced supernatural-fantasy period drama *Painted Skin* (Hua Pi, 2008), in Mandarin and starring three Mainland actresses, was chosen as Hong Kong’s submission for that year’s Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. As Hong Kong scholar Laikwan Pang (2010a: 141) soon pointed out, “should the nationalist model prevail, this is likely to be the last generation of film talent to retain this distinctive identity.” The outspoken Hong Kong director Derek Yee Tung-sing also openly asserted that “pure Hong Kong movies” will vanish in three years and give way to “Hong Kong-made

Chinese movies” (sina.com, 2009). He refers here to the Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced movies that succumbed to the Chinese regulation in subject matter, catering to the Mainland audience and international market (ibid). The award-winning Derek Yee is well known for his keen observation and incisive representation of Hong Kong’s social reality in his films such as *C'est la vie, mon chéri* (*Xin Bu Liao Qin*, 1994), or *One Nite in Mongkok* (*Wang Jiao Hei Ye*, 2004).

In his article “*Promise and Perhaps Love: Pan-Asian production and the Hong Kong-China interrelationship*”, Stephen Teo (2008) analysed the interrelationships between the Hong Kong cinema and its Mainland Chinese counterpart. Through detailed case studies of two co-produced movies in 2005— Mainland director Chen Kaige’s *The Promise* (*Wu Ji*) and Hong Kong director Peter Chan’s *Perhaps Love* (*Ru Guo Ai*)— Teo (2008: 345) argues that co-production “is chiefly motivated by the China part of the equation in the long-term survival of the Hong Kong cinema,” and admits that “Hong Kong’s future is embedded in its political-economic relationship with China”. He suggests that “the Hong Kong film industry will gradually be integrated into the China market through refinements of CEPA” (Teo, 2008: 355). However, as Teo himself pointed out, his paper did not touch upon the Chinese film industry itself, which has its own problems and contradictions. Rather, his observation of the Hong Kong-China relationship in co-production has been limited to the aspect of how Hong Kong cinema taps into the Mainland market, rather than the industrial integration of the two cinemas on a production level. The China factor in Hong Kong cinema has been reduced to merely a huge consumer market with a rapidly growing economy encouraging “its neighbors — the cultural industries — to focus on the transnationalisation, or ‘Asianisation’, of marketing and advertising” (Lo 2005:133, as cited in Teo, 2008: 345).

In fact, through the co-production, Chinese cinema is also on a course of industrial upgrading and “marketisation” by appropriating talents, techniques and management experiences from Hong Kong. The springing up of co-productions has substantively changed the look of both Hong Kong and Mainland cinemas, and made them less distinct regarding each other. While some are bemoaning the fading of a Hong Kong flavour and the loss of a clear-cut identity of Hong Kong cinema, in contrast to the present Mainland cinema, most Mainland media and academia applaud the upgrading changes in mainland cinema, such as the commercial achievements of Zhang Yimou’s recent co-produced martial arts movies such as *Hero* (*Ying Xiong*, 2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (*Shi Mian Mai Fu*, 2004) and Feng Xiaogang’s *The Banquet* (*Ye Yan*, 2006). Therefore, the question of reconceptualizing Hong Kong cinema, the once quasi-national cinema, and one major thread of Chinese-language cinemas, was raised from the formation of the umbrella of Chinese-language cinema in the wave of economic integration in the Greater China region, especially, between the Mainland and Hong Kong.

With this background of expansion of co-production and establishment of “Chinese cinema” integrating both mainland Chinese and Hong Kong cinemas, I will now focus on the Mainland actresses through examination of their changing roles in co-productions, and their on and off screen images, in order to illuminate the “northern expedition” of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema as a matter of survival and then transformation.

1. The Mainland Actress as Token in Hong Kong-Mainland Co-productions

Simply speaking, the regular appearances of mainland actresses in post-1997 Hong

Kong movies is dictated by the crew ratio requirement for co-productions set by the PRC film regulation. The requirement was triggered by the early 1990s frenzy of co-productions which involved, essentially, Hong Kong movies shot on mainland soil. The emergence of the Mainland actresses in Hong Kong cinema had started as a token participation of a backward, less market driven mainland Chinese cinema before the decade long privatisation and commercialisation reform.

1.1 Cross-Border Film Co-production in the PRC: From Filming Location to Film Market

Cross-border film co-production, besides the obvious benefits of cultural exchange, has always been an efficient way to share risks while pooling resources such as talent, production creativity, and capital, as well as government funding and tax concessions from different countries. Moreover, the consideration of access to the partner's domestic market as a local production has recently become the greatest incentive for co-productions, especially for filmmakers who are eager to reach the over one billion audience in a single market — China. The PRC officially opened up Mainland China for cross-border film production as early as 1979 with the establishment of the China Film Co-production Corporation (CFCC) under the Cultural Ministry as a contact point to administer and co-ordinate Chinese-foreign co-productions. However, only during the last decade has the attraction of Mainland China as a film-co-production partner shifted from a mere cost-effective filming location with vast natural scenery, historical buildings and cheap on-location labour to a lucrative film consumer market. The box office revenue of the Mainland market has soared by an average of 30 per cent annually for the six years since the PRC's 2003 drastic reform of the film industry and effort to

introduce a theatre chain system in China (CBC News, 2010). By the year 2009, the total box office revenue had reached 6.2 billion RMB (about 900 million USD) (Ibid).

Following Australia's lead of signing the deal in August 2007, three more countries — France, New Zealand and Singapore — signed their official film co-production treaties with China in 2010. Besides Canada and Italy, who had established a treaty-based film co-production relationship much earlier for historical and diplomatic reasons, among all the six partners of China, these three have rushed in all at one time coveting China's thriving film market. As the General Manager of Park Road Post Production based in New Zealand, Cameron Harland, put it, "This is the second-biggest market in terms of box office in the world and is growing at 40 per cent a year, so clearly there are opportunities. We're smart just to get in here as early as we can" (Stuff.co.nz. July 3, 2010). In fact, the popularity of China as a potential filmmaking partner and market has to be attributed to the successful model of Hong Kong-mainland co-production which accounts for over 70 per cent of Sino-foreign co-production. New Zealand Park Road, the post production facility that is famous for its work in *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (2001-03) and *King Kong* (2005) had just finished the post production for a Chinese historical epic *Red Cliff (Chi Bi, 2008)* directed by one of the biggest name in Hong Kong cinema— John Woo. This movie is his first mainland China production and first Chinese film after 15 years of working in Hollywood (1993-2008). It ranked first in box office revenue in the Mainland in 2008, — 320 million RMB (about US\$47 million) (Chinafilm.com, 2009). Under the rules of the CEPA, a co-production with the Mainland can be deemed as a domestic product. In this regard, the production companies can get 45 per cent of the Mainland box office revenue. Meanwhile, an imported foreign film can only get 15 per cent, although Hong Kong made Chinese-

language films can be imported without being considered part of the annual 20 foreign film import quota.

From a pecuniary point view, these provisions are evidently enticing Hong Kong filmmakers to co-produce with the Mainland rather than export their films to it. However, to qualify as a co-production, at least one-third of the main cast in the Hong Kong film must be Chinese mainlanders as stipulated in the CEPA (website of Trade and Industry Dept. HKSAR, 2012). This is seen as preferential treatment for Hong Kong, as before the CEPA took effect in 2004, Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions were still bound by the 50 per cent Mainland crew requirement enforced since 1996.

Moreover, the old policy required that the story of the film should take place in specific Chinese mainland locations named in the co-production agreement, which is still in effect for other foreign-Mainland co-productions now. This strict stipulation about the Mainland involvement in all co-productions was first issued as a decree in 1996 by the Film and Television Bureau (reorganised as the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television in 1998). It was triggered by the rampant trend of “fake co-production” in which Hong Kong film companies gained their access to film shooting in the Mainland through partnering with the local state-owned studios. In these “co-produced” films, the major contribution of the Mainland studio was its studio logo — essential to the film shooting permit application in China at that time. Most of these were period films set in the splendid northwest Chinese deserts, or using the magnificent historical heritage like the Great Wall or the Forbidden City. Among them are some of big successes in Hong Kong film history such as the benchmark for new *wuxia* genre *Dragon Inn* (*Xin Long Men Ke Zhan*, 1992) produced by Tsui Hark, the *Once Upon a Time in China* series (*Huang Fei Hong*, 1992-1993) starring Jet Li, *King of Beggars* (*Su Qi Er*, 1992) and *A Chinese Odyssey* (*Da Hua Xi You*, 1994) starring Stephen Chow,

Wang Jing's *The New Legend Of Shaolin* (*Xin Shao Lin Wu Zu*, 1994), and Wong Kar-wai's philosophical *wuxia* film *Ashes of Time* (*Dong Xie Xi Du*, 1994). In the 2008 re-edited and re-released version under the title *Ashes of Time Redux*, Wong emphasised in the DVD director commentary that he was among the first Hong Kong filmmakers who came to shoot films on the Mainland. To be exact, he was only among those first Hong Kong filmmakers who made films in the Mainland for the overseas market, rather than targeting the Mainland market as in the current post-CEPA extensive northbound trend of Hong Kong cinema.

In the 1980s to 90s, the mainland Chinese film industry saw a great increase in co-production since the establishment of the China Film Co-production Corporation in 1979. In the 1979 to mid-1998 period in China, 247 out of 260 co-produced films have been produced with Hong Kong (Lim, 2006: 343). The peak time was from 1993 to 1995 (Hu, 2000: 25, as cited in Lim, 2006) before the crew ratio requirement was set. This trend of Hong Kong filmmakers shooting films in the mainland in the early 1990s can be attributed to two historical turns respectively in the PRC and Taiwan since the late 1980s which have greatly influenced the production of the Hong Kong film industry — the lifting of Martial Law in Taiwan and the market economy reform in the PRC. In 1986, two years after the concept of the market economy was first introduced, the PRC government reclassified the film industry from a propaganda apparatus to a cultural industry by moving the Film Bureau — the state monopoly administration of the film industry — from the supervision of the Ministry of Culture to the Ministry of Radio, Film and Television (Zhu, 2002: 907). In the same year in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formed and inaugurated as the first opposition party to the KMT (Kuomintang) Party's rule in Taiwan as a *de facto* one-party state under martial law.

With the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan gradually opened up its film market to Hong Kong productions, with Mainland involvement in the following years, and considerable Taiwan capital channel led through Hong Kong to invest in filmmaking on the Mainland. Meanwhile, since film has lost its strategic position in the PRC as a government tool, the old mandatory block-booking system which guarantees film distribution and exhibition through administrative fiat was gradually replaced by a more relaxed profit-sharing mode. While giving more economic incentive to the film studio, however, it has also almost paralysed those state-owned film studios. There are two reasons for its setback for the Chinese film studios: for one thing, these studios had long depended on the planned economy and had no experience in marketing; for another, the whole Chinese film industry was facing the great challenge of television as TV sets became an affordable household necessity in the Mainland in the 1980s (Lim, 2006; Zhu, 2002).

However, to the well-established commercial institution of Hong Kong cinema, the relaxation of political pressure from both sides of the strait has brought great opportunities. Taiwan has been the major market of Hong Kong cinema, where it enjoyed preferential policy in distribution and exhibition until, in 1994, Taiwan opened up its screens to all foreign films by importing with low tariffs and no restrictions on the number of prints (Yeh, 2006: 158). Throughout the 1980s to the early 1990s, Taiwan's cultural policy has thus been a great concern for Hong Kong filmmakers, especially when it came to matters of cross-strait tension. For example, Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Ka-Fai, the youngest winner of Best Actor at HKFA for his debut film performance in the first publicly exhibited Hong Kong-Mainland co-production *The Burning of the Imperial Palace (Hu Shao Yuan Ming Yuan)* and its sequel *Reign Behind the Curtain (Chui Lian Ting Zheng)*, 1983), was banned from Taiwan screens for a

whole year in 1985. This ban meant that he could hardly find any film acting jobs in Hong Kong as Taiwan was then the major market of the Hong Kong film industry. Another example of Hong Kong filmmakers being unfairly treated in Taiwan because of Mainland involvement in their works is director Ann Hui. She and all her works to that time were banned in Taiwan in early 1980s as a result of her award-winning *Boat People (Tou Ben Nu Hai, 1982)* depicting the life of Vietnamese people being shot in Hainan, PRC, a South China sea island where the landscape and weather is quite similar to that of Vietnam.

The intimidating film regulation policy in Taiwan in the 1980s had thwarted the Hong Kong filmmakers' interests and intention to get out of the artificial studio setting and to take advantage of the resources of the Mainland as a shooting location. Most of the 1980s Hong Kong films co-produced with China was produced by the left-wing film studios, which were actually under the control of Beijing since their establishment in the 1950s. The first Hong Kong film shot in the mainland after the lifting of the PRC's self-imposed blockade was *The Enigmatic Case (Bi Shui Han Shan Duo Min Jin, 1980)* (Johnnie To's film debut), produced by the Feng Huang Motion Pictures Company. At the same time, another Hong Kong left-wing film studio, the Chung Yuen Motion Picture, produced *The Shaolin Temple (Shao Lin Si, 1982)* starring Jet Li in his debut role that catapulted him from a mainland athlete to the leading Hong Kong *kung fu* star. In 1982, together with the other two studios, the Great Wall Movie Enterprises and the Feng Huang Motion Pictures, the four leftist film studios amalgamated into the Sil-Metropole Organisation. Even today, the Hong Kong registered Sil-Metropole enjoys the status of a PRC state-owned studio, allowing it to be the Chinese partner in co-productions and its films to be deemed as domestic productions.

Although these 1980s left-wing studio productions are generally recognised as the earliest Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions, they were in essence Mainland films made by the PRC government-controlled film studios registered in Hong Kong. In order not to jeopardise the Taiwan market, the majority of the Hong Kong film industry had been carefully avoiding any connection with the Mainland throughout the 1980s. In the early 1990s, the lifting of martial law in Taiwan had allayed Hong Kong filmmakers' misgivings about the Mainland, and they started to perceive the Mainland as a cost-effective shooting location with abundant natural scenery and cheap labour. Meanwhile, the straitened Chinese state-owned film studios were in desperate need of foreign capital due to the cuts of the government funding as one part of the market economy reform in the PRC. Moreover, in 1993, the Film and Television Bureau issued the "Document Three—Suggestions on the Deepening of Chinese Film Industries Institutional Reform" which overhauled the national monopoly over film distribution (Zhu, 2002: 76), and broke the block-booking system characterised by the fixed price per film print. As mentioned in the previous chapter, since 1994, China started to import ten foreign films on a box-office revenue-sharing basis. Also in that year, the Hong Kong film *Once Upon a Time in China III* (1993), which also shot in the Mainland, became the first co-produced film enjoying the revenue-split after a hard negotiation with the Mainland distributor (M1905.com. Dec. 26, 2008).

Before adopting the revenue-split practice, the Hong Kong films screened in the Mainland used to be sold by print at a much lower price. This new mode of distribution has greatly increased profit from the Mainland market and triggered the aforementioned trend of "fake co-productions". In these Hong Kong-led productions, the only recognizable mainland participation was the desert setting and state-owned film studio logo for which the Hong Kong producers generally had to pay 500,000 RMB (about

US\$78215) or less per film. As noted by Zhu (2002: 911), this “coproduction maneuver” was, in essence, the opportunistic manipulation of “a continued state monopoly over production and distribution rights,” and was soon detected and curbed through administrative measure. In 1996, the PRC Film Bureau ordered the ratio of 50 per cent Chinese mainlanders in the main cast of co-production to eliminate the negative effect of fake domestic films and fake co-productions according to Film Bureau document (Zhu, 2002: 916). Thus, at this point, the Mainland actresses started repeatedly making their perfunctory appearances as “Kong Girls” in the Hong Kong- Mainland co-productions as a way of satisfying the PRC film Bureau requirements.

1.2 Functional ‘Kong Girls’ in the Masculine Hong Kong Cinema

“Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.”

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own

(New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), p. 35.

Although many of the feminist opinions in Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” published in 1970s (Mulvey, 1975) may sound too provocative and she had to moderate a bit in a follow-up article, “Afterthoughts on ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’” (Mulvey, 1989), her observation on how the audience is put in a masculine subject position and encouraged to identify with the male protagonist of the film can easily find evidence in Hong Kong cinema, which features and depends on masculine icons like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. Female characters in Hong Kong cinema are usually subordinate to the male protagonist to add to the “visual

pleasure” or to highlight the male’s charisma. In Hong Kong’s film co-production with the Mainland, Mainland actresses are subject to the double oppression/repression of the patriarchal order and the economic and technological disparity between the two cinemas.

Years before the emergence of iconic figures like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, Hong Kong cinema established its star system. This dated from the 1960s, especially involving the male hero figures in the films of director Chang Cheh— “the Godfather of Hong Kong cinema.” The prolific Chang had directed over a hundred films for Shaw Brothers Studio, the foremost movie production company of Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s (Desser, 2005: 17). Modelled after the classic Hollywood system, Shaw Brothers signed exclusive contracts with its actors and assigned them in groups to work exclusively with certain directors. With his “brotherhood tales”, Chang had successfully cemented the leading status of many male film stars such as Jimmy Wang Yu in *One-Armed Swordsman (Du Bi Dao, 1967)*, Ti Lung in *Return of the One Armed Swordsman (Du Bi Dao Wang, 1969)*, Chiang Da-wei in *Vengeance! (Bao Chou, 1970)* and *Blood Brothers (Ci Ma, 1973)*. Chang’s “heroic bloodshed” movies, which emphasise brotherhood, loyalty and honour, had a profound influence on Hong Kong directors such as John Woo and Ringo Lam in the 1990s. As Hong Kong film critic Sek Kei (2004: 4) noted, “Due to the dominance of Chang Cheh’s *yang gang* (masculine) style, local cinema suffered from a lopsided development, leaving male stars [as] the sole attraction.”

Meanwhile, another Hong Kong film company Golden Harvest, which supplanted Shaw Brothers by the end of 1970s to dominate Hong Kong movie production till the late 1990s, had produced three kung fu movies starring Bruce Lee and catapulted him to the

status of a martial arts legend and a Hong Kong cultural icon. Lee's last film, *Enter the Dragon* (*Long Zheng Hu Dou*, 1973), was the first Hong Kong co-production with Hollywood and a worldwide hit, bringing Hong Kong cinema to world attention. After Bruce Lee's premature death, Golden Harvest started to model one of his stuntman after him — Jackie Chan. In *New Fist of Fury* (*Xin Jin Wu Men*, 1976), a sequel to Bruce Lee's *Fist of Fury* (a.k.a. *The Chinese Connection*, *Jin Wu Men*, 1972), Jackie Chan adopted for the first time the Chinese stage name "Sing Lung," which means "becoming a dragon," as Bruce Lee's Chinese name was "little dragon." To reinforce this linkage, actress Nora Miu Ho-Sau, who had appeared in all three of Bruce Lee's Hong Kong films, was cast in this sequel and became "an icon connecting Lee and Chan" (Desser, 2005: 288). In this casting manoeuvre, the decorative supporting female role becomes a non-diegetic functional character, a facile marketing tactic, while her diegetic function is to serve as man's love/lust interest and help achieve his fulfillment. Regarding the export-oriented, male-dominant Hong Kong cinema, one can easily tell the major target market of a "buddy film" from the cast of the female role. The popularity of Taiwanese female stars like Brigitte Lin and Joey Wong in the 1980s, and occasional appearances of South Korean or Japanese actresses playing opposite Jackie Chan or other Hong Kong male stars, are clear demonstrations of this strategy of tapping into the regional market.

Following this marketing logic, before the Mainland cast requirement of co-production was introduced in 1996, in the early 1990s the internationally acclaimed Mainland actress Gong Li had already repeatedly appeared in Hong Kong movies, and had even had some influence on the lifting of the Taiwanese policy on the prohibition of movies with a Mainland cast in 1993. Unlike the commercial Hong Kong cinema, which was heavily dependent on the masculine glamour, the Mainland Chinese national cinema

entered the world stage with the works of the fifth generation filmmakers – in Rey Chow’s words an “Oriental’s orientalism” (Chow,1995: 170) or “cooperative orientalism” (Cui, 2000: 111) which accommodated the Chinese national film production to the Western Oriental perception/expectation through “a self-display for the voyeuristic gaze” (ibid) through manipulation of female body/image. *Red Sorghum* (*Hong Gao Liang*, 1987), the debut of both the director Zhang Yimou and his on-screen muse Gong Li, had won the Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival, and their second film *Ju Dou* (1990), starring Gong Li as the title character, was the first Chinese-language film nominated for an Academy Award (followed by their next film *Raise the Red Lantern* (*Da Hong Deng Long Gao Gao Guai*, 1991) as the second one). Though often criticised as a series of “national allegories” or “autoethnography” (Zhang, 2002a: 208) by embodying “Third-Worldness” in the socially oppressed class, such as women, the successes at the film festival exhibition gained Chinese cinema unprecedented international recognition and made Gong Li, “the logo for Zhang Yimou’s films” (Stuart Klawan, as cited in Cui, 2000, 112), the best known Chinese film star.

In order to taking advantage of Gong Li’s box office value in the international market, Hong Kong producer Tsui Hark starred her in the co-produced film *Fight and Love with a Terracotta Warrior* (*Gu Jin Da Zhan Qin Yong Qing*, 1989), based on Hong Kong writer Lillian Lee’s novel. This mysterious Chinese story about a forbidden love undergoing almost two-thousand years of repeated reincarnations has gained great commercial success worldwide despite being excluded from the Taiwan market due to the prohibition of using a mainland cast. This success had also resulted in the “two versions, two actresses” incident mentioned in Chapter Three (see Figure 3.1-2): Hong Kong local comedy star Stephen Chow’s *God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai* (*Du*

Xia II Zhi, Shanghai Tan Du Sheng, 1991), starring Gong Li in the standard version, had replaced the internationally acclaimed Mainland female lead with a local Taiwanese actress for the Taiwan market only. This incident triggered a call for a further loosening of Taiwanese policy from allowing Mainland scenery on the silver screen to permitting Mainland skilled personnel as well. The lift of the prohibition was precipitated by Gong Li's other Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced film *Farewell My Concubine* (*Ba Wang Bie Ji*, 1993) (another adaptation of Lillian Lee's novel) winning the highest prize at Cannes Film Festival, the Palme d'Or. In spite of the fact that the film was actually financed by Taiwanese capital, the Taiwan film industry did not get its due credit as it was submitted as a Hong Kong film and was prohibited in Taiwan due to the employment of Mainland artists. Therefore, since the international success of *Farewell My Concubine*, Taiwan gradually lifted its prohibition of Hong Kong films with a Mainland cast.



Figure 4.1 DVD cover of *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) starring Hong Kong actor *Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing* and Mainland actress *Gong Li*

Looking back at this history of Mainland-Hong Kong co-production in the early 1990s, it is instructive to see how the career path of a Mainland actress was entwined with the production of Hong Kong cinema and the cross-straits tension in which the industry was shrouded. However, despite her many symbolic on-screen representations of an oppressed/repressed China, Gong Li alone cannot represent the Mainland cinema's participation in the cooperation with Hong Kong, while many of her films had been temporarily banned in the Mainland in the early 1990s when China's cultural policy was still rather inconsistent. The marketisation reform of the film industry marked by "Document 3" in 1993 was restrained by the 1996 *Changsha* conference launching a campaign "to criticise 'spiritual pollution' and to limit cultural autonomy and regulate the cultural market" (Zhu, 2002: 916). In addition, the 1996 No.465 Film Bureau document stipulating the cast ratio of 50 per cent reduced the enthusiasm of Hong Kong filmmakers who had wanted to take advantage of the relaxed Taiwanese cultural policy to make co-produced films in the Mainland.

The large-scale co-production took place only in the post-1997 era, when Hong Kong had lost both its local market and the Taiwan market to Hollywood and, with the devaluation of Southeast Asian countries currencies caused by the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, became paralysed. The northern expedition to the to-be-exploited mainland market became the "survival mission" of Hong Kong cinema, but in fact turned out to be a journey of transformation through real co-production with the Mainland.

2. The Mainland Actress as a Stepping Stone in Industry Reconfiguration

In the post-1997 era, which refers both to after the changeover of Hong Kong and the Asian financial crisis, the Hong Kong film industry started to focus on the newly

acquired Mainland market and took on a domestic status via co-production under the terms of the CEPA. Meanwhile, it was in 1998 that the PRC set up the Department of Cultural Industry under the Ministry of Culture, and officially inaugurated the notion of “developing cultural industry” in 2000 in anticipation of the challenge of China’s 2001 entry into the WTO (China Daily, 2009). To Hong Kong, especially to the northbound Hong Kong cinema, “China-development opened up a discursive space that allowed them to articulate their strategies of postcolonial subjectivities in-between going ‘back’ to and staying ‘out’ of China” (Wong, 2002: 157). Under the title of a Special Administration Region, Hong Kong “vacillated between their Western and Chinese identifications” to demonstrate their “superiority and moral legitimacy to provide for their mainland compatriots models of development” (Wong, 2002: 142), and this “cultivation” process is illustrated in the filmic representation of the Mainland embodied in the Mainland actresses in the co-produced movies. This binary characterisation of Hong Kong “self” and the Mainland “other” continued from the 1980s Hong Kong cinema, and can be read as one of the characteristics of the “run-in” phase of post-CEPA co-production with Hong Kong “staying out of China”.

2.1 Modernising the Country (Girl):

***My Dream Girl* as a New Foreign-market Movie**

First posted on the Hong Kong Film Critic Society website, “CEPA Effects and New Types of HK Films Exploring Mainland Market” (Tang, 2004: n.pag.), Tang Zhen-Zhao was the first to put forward the notion of “NFM” (New Foreign-market Movie) to refer to “new types of films which focus merely on the Mainland market” and “‘New’ refers to the new overseas location of releasing Hong Kong films. Southeast Asia used to be the most popular destinations of showing Hong Kong movies; and now it’s

Mainland,” as he further explains. The movie *My Dream Girl* (*Pao Zhi Nv Peng You*), released in 2003 right after the signing of the CEPA, was cited in Tang’s article as “a worrying instance” for this new type of Hong Kong movie in terms of its complete focus on the Mainland market.

The movie is generally based on a slipshod characterisation of a rustic “country girl” character from mainland China vs. a self-righteous modern professional male character from Hong Kong in a combination of the cliché *My Fair Lady* type of comedy plotline. It tells a story about the unemployed Hong Kong man coming to Shanghai becoming the image designer of the Mainland girl who had just reunited with her rich father from America, and tries to remodel her into a fashionable urban lady.



Figure 4.2 Movie poster of *My Dream Girl* (2003): the image of mainland actress Zhao Wei changes from a rustic mainland girl (left) to a stylish urban lady (right)

However, as a new phenomenon for Hong Kong cinema and Hong Kong film critics, the “worrying” part of the movie lies in its uprooting setting from Hong Kong to the potential rivalry — Shanghai — and reversing the wealth hierarchy of Mainland “Other”

and Hong Kong “Self”. In a book review, David Der-wei Wang (2000: 156) notes that Hong Kong-based cultural scholar Leo Ou-fan Lee has invoked “the ghostly parallels between Hong Kong and Shanghai” in his book *Shanghai Modern*. In the “Epilogue: A Tale of Two Cities” of *Shanghai Modern*, Leo Ou-fan Lee (1999: 324) took Hong Kong as the “Other” of Shanghai, and noted that “it takes the ‘other’ (Hong Kong) to understand the self (Shanghai),” which in this case is to understand Hong Kong *through* Shanghai. In the movie *My Dream Girl*, the portrayal of the cityscape of Shanghai is mostly through an “admiring” low angle shot, in addition to a city promotional video type of 360 degree spin shot. In contrast, the depiction of Hong Kong, which was yet to recover from the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2003 SARS epidemic, is epitomised through the frustrated army of the unemployed seeking opportunity northward. As Tang (2004: n.pag.) bitterly noted, in the movie “traces of anxiety caused by the collapse of confidence are obvious” through the repeated line “Hong Kongers won’t be defeated!” Such blunt counter-flow and contrast of Hong Kong and the Mainland was at the time unprecedented in Hong Kong’s cinematic imagination, despite the residual Hong Kong chauvinism in terms of Western-defined modernity that is demonstrated in the process of remoulding or “enculturalizing” the “upstart” Mainland.

In Hong Kong cinema, the image of the Mainland “other” has been a long existing reference “to images of how Hong Kong sees itself and its relation to the Mainland” (Strokes & Hoover, 1999: 222). However, the binary opposition is mostly from an insider angle to gaze upon the mainlander as intruders to Hong Kong, disruptive to local life as ludicrous country bumpkins or dangerous gangsters and prostitutes. In fact, the movie *Intruder* (1997) is a Category III (adult-only) crime thriller released upon the political changeover of Hong Kong depicting a female fugitive from the Mainland. Its “worst paranoia about rapacious Chinese” (Davis & Yeh, 2001: 12) is revealed directly

from its metaphoric Chinese title “Horrible Chicken” (in Chinese slang, chicken means prostitute). In contrast to the *femme fatale* of “horrible chicken” from the Mainland, *Golden Chicken* sequel (*Jin Ji*, 2003) made an explicit identification between Hong Kong and a local prostitute with a “golden heart” being “hailed as the ultimate hero and emblem of the ‘Hong Kong spirit’” and turned the movie into the highly-praised Hong Kong “vehicle for collective self-expression” (V. Lee, 2009:167-172). Among those post-1997 but pre-CEPA, non-Mainland market-oriented Hong Kong movies involving the depiction of mainlanders, the most notable one is Fruit Chan’s unfinished “Prostitute Trilogy” composed of *Durian Durian* (*Liu Lian Piao Piao*, 2000) and *Hollywood, Hong Kong* (*Xiang Gang You Ge Hao Lian Wu*, 2001). Both of the movies focus on the low-caste outsider, the Mainland women seeking fortune as sex workers in Hong Kong, as an articulation of “the new, often still contradictory, realities of ‘one country, two systems’ in action” (Gan, 2005: 1). Together with the *Golden Chicken* sequel, these four films have all taken up the theme of the prostitutes located in Hong Kong (be it local woman or the migrant from the Mainland). Moreover, they have all represented on the screen a China that is “less a distant or estranged Other or geographical power in the future (anterior) than a material presence interwoven into the fabric of (Hong Kong) everyday life” and facilitated Hong Kong’s “self-reflexive interrogation of its historical becoming” (V. Lee, 2009: 182).



Figure 4.3 Mainland actress Qin Hailu in *Durian Durian* (2000), winner of the Best Picture award at the 38th Taiwan Golden Horse Awards, the Best Actress and Best New Performer awards

However, upon the Hong Kong-Mainland economic integration era marked by the CEPA, *My Dream Girl* has for the first time stepped out of the “comfort zone” of Hong Kong to observe the changing dynamics of mainland China in the international economic arena as a newcomer to the country. Meanwhile, the remaining “colonial-capitalist/Westernised component (in her composite identity), which serves as the basis by which Hong Kong can view mainland China as the “other”” (Yau, 1996: 198), now engages the newly re-patriated “Hong Kongers” in “a liberalizing mission” to open mainland China up to the “outside” (Wong, 2002: 152). Modernizing and feminizing the uncouth and de-gendered mainland country girls who were the victims of anti-bourgeois thinking prevalent in the pre-opening-up Mainland and the “Down to the Countryside Movement” during the Cultural Revolution, sending privileged urban youth to live and work in the remote farming area, is again adapted in the pioneer post-CEPA new type of Hong Kong movie focusing on the Mainland market.

Early in 1990, the highly influential Hong Kong comedy *Her Fatal Ways* (*Biao Jie Ni Hao Ye*) has depicted “Hong Kong’s capitalistic enterprise” in the form of fashion and makeup evoking a “simultaneous attraction and repulsion of Westernised corruption” (Strikes & Hoover, 1999: 223) of a Mainland policewoman on a mission in Hong Kong. While the stereotype of the die-hard communist in the movie serves as an emotional outlet for post-traumatic stress caused by the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, the movie ends with the brand new look of the Mainland police officer dressed up as an attractive woman representing the modern capitalist Hong Kong, so civilizing “the backward Chinese and thereby neutralise the effects of the 1997 takeover” as “the capitalist seductions of the city can ‘soften’ the ‘hard’ mainlanders to such a degree that perhaps 1997 will not be as traumatic as expected” (Shih, 1998: 301).

Her Fatal Ways has won Hong Kong actress Carol Cheng the 10th HKFA for the Best Actress for her role as the outlandish Mainlander despite her perfect Hong Kong style Cantonese. However, in the more recent movies about the mainland women, Mandarin or heavily Mandarin-accented Cantonese is highlighted to emphasise their “otherness”. The Mainland fugitive in *Intruder (Kong Bu Ji, 1997)* was played by Taiwanese star Jacklyn Wu Chien-lien, while Fruit Chan’s two Mainland prostitute movies both cast the Mainland actresses Qin Hai Lu in *Durian Durian* and Zhou Xun in *Hollywood, Hong Kong*. It is notable that, similar to the experience of Gong Li being cast in Hong Kong movies because of her international fame through the works of Chinese fifth generation directors, prior to *Hollywood, Hong Kong*, Zhou Xun had won Best Actress Award at the 2000 Paris Film Festival for her role in a Mainland production *Suzhou River (Su Zhou He, 2000, dir. Lou Ye)*. This film was granted the Grand Prix and regarded as a landmark of the Sixth Generation movement in Chinese cinema (Vick, 2007: 26), although the film itself was banned in China.

The success of Chinese films on the international film festival circuit has blazed a new trail, leading Mainland actresses to international stardom outside Hong Kong’s conventional male star system, with international fame gaining these actresses access to substantial participation in Hong Kong cinema. A typical example is Zhang Ziyi, who is the first Jackie Chan’s “Little Dragon Girl” from the Mainland and later the 2005 HKFA Best Actress winner for her cooperation with the internationally renowned Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-wai. Before taking the role in the Hollywood-Hong Kong co-produced Jackie Chan film *Rush Hour 2 (Jian Feng Shi Ke II, 2001)* Zhang Ziyi had debuted in Zhang Yimou’s Berlin Film Festival Silver Bear winner *Road Home (Wo De Fu Qin Mu Qin, 1999)*, immediately followed by her major role in Ang Lee’s Academy Award winning *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (2000)*. The combination of Hong

Kong actor with mainland actress has gradually become a common tactical formula for international promotion in Hong Kong cinema. Meanwhile, cooperation with Hong Kong cinema has also become a means for mainland Chinese filmmakers to offset the entertainment/commercial elements lacking in the PRC film industry. This pattern was as seen in the “commercial turn” of the Fifth Generation directors in the new century, such as Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), both Mainland-Hong Kong co-productions following the earlier example of Chen Kaige’s *Farewell My Concubine* (1993).

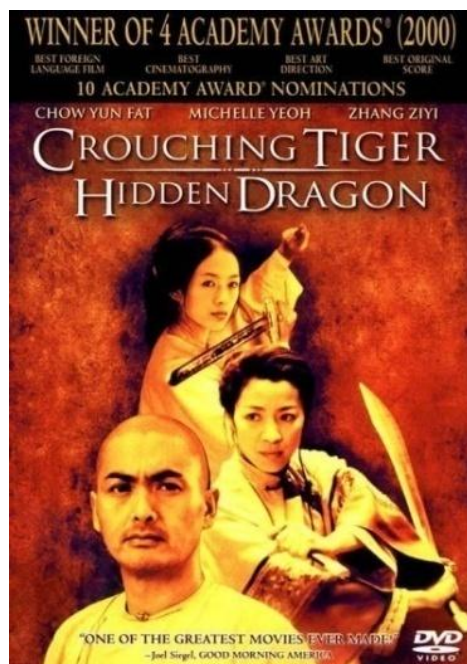


Figure 4.4 DVD Cover of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) starring Mainland Actress Zhang Ziyi (top), Malaysian Actress Michelle Yeoh (middle), and Hong Kong megastar Chou Yun-Fat

In the post-CEPA era, as for the Hong Kong-led co-productions with an unequivocal Mainland focus, apart from the basic need for market entry in the mainland, mainlanders, mostly actresses, also serve as “anchors” for the newly claimed market. Hence, the mainland actresses started to make frequent appearances in Hong Kong movies and stand out impressively. As mentioned earlier, in 2005, mainland actress

Zhang Ziyi won the Best Actress of HKFA for her role playing against Hong Kong actor Tony Leung Chiu-wai, who won the Best Actor in Wong Kar-wai's *2046* (2004), a loose sequel to *In the Mood for Love* (*Hua Yang Nian Hua*, 2000) which had also won Tony Leung the Best Actor award at the Cannes Film Festival for the same character. Since then, for the next four successive years, all the Best Actress awards of the HKFA have been taken by actresses with a Mainland background. Given that the two Hong Kong actresses winning 2009 and 2010 awards are either near or over 60, it is noteworthy that the Mainland actresses have become an important component of Hong Kong cinema. The fact that Mainland actresses are reconfiguring the co-production pattern and speeding up the industrial integration of Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese cinemas has become a much more "worrying instance" for Hong Kong film critics than the New Foreign-market Movie focusing on the Mainland market as represented by the mediocre film *My Dream Girl*. In fact, another award-winning co-produced film *My Name is Fame* (2006) has more clearly manifested the changing dynamics of Hong Kong and the PRC (cinemas).

2.2 When Collaborator Becomes Contender:

Mainland Actress as the Real Winner in *My Name is Fame*

On 15 April 2007, just before the tenth anniversary of Hong Kong becoming a Special Administrative Region, the 26th Hong Kong Film Awards was held in the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. At the moment of retrospection and anticipation, that year's Award caught people's attention with its explicit stated theme "Pass on the experience, Look northward to the Mainland", and the irrefutable fact that the mainland actresses were taking both the Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress Awards. While the Best supporting actor was given to a nine-year-old Indonesian-Hong Kong boy, Ian Gouw,

for his first silver screen appearance, the only comforting, if not heartening part, for those who insist in a distinct Hong Kong cinema was local film veteran Sean Lau Ching-Wan. After seven nominations over 13 years, Sean Lau finally won his long overdue Best Actor for his role in the movie *My Name is Fame* (*Wo Yao Cheng Ming*, 2006) — although this was also a co-production with a female lead from the Mainland.



Figure 4.5 DVD cover for *My Name is Fame* (2006)
starring Hong Kong actor Sean Lau Ching-Wan and Mainland actress Huo Siyan

By no means is *My Name is Fame* Sean Lau’s best work, but no doubt the most meaningful one on different levels both to the actor himself and to the deteriorating local film industry in terms of both the quantity and the “fading Hong Kong flavour” quality due to its general trend of “heading north”. The movie is about a romance between a dispirited middle-aged Hong Kong actor and a young perky Mainland actress who inspires him to return to his career path and towards a new understanding of life. This story is, in fact, quite similar to Sean Lau’s first movie — the 1993 HKFA Best

Picture *C'est la vie, mon chéri* (dir. Derek Yee Tung-Shing) — which had also brought Lau his first nomination for the Best Actor Award. In *C'est la vie, mon chéri*, Lau played a talented but frustrated musician who fell in love with a poor but carefree young female singer. However, the major difference lies in the 1993 movie's unambiguous focus on the male character's struggling life, while the 2006 one is more concerned with the subplot of the young female character's career ambition. In the co-produced *My Name is Fame*, the explicit Mainland background of the female character (played by Huo Si-yan) serves as an implicit representation of the rejuvenated Mainland film industry. The on-screen actress comes from the Mainland to Hong Kong and starts as an unnamed extra in local film production. Touched by her enthusiasm and persistence in acting, the “has-been” Hong Kong movie star Lau mentors her, and meanwhile, redeems himself. It is easy to draw the analogy here as Hong Kong cinema mentored mainland Chinese cinema as an entertaining and commercial cultural industry, while itself being past its peak.

Towards the end of the movie, the actress— already an international star— comes back to Hong Kong from overseas to present the award to her former mentor and lover, which is a painful pleasure for the protagonist of the movie and for Hong Kong cinema as well. Although the “cultivation mission” as shown in the movie *My Dream Girl* remains obvious, four years later the passive “country (girl)” to be remoulded or modernised by Hong Kong is here being represented as an aggressive contender bypassing her mentor. Moreover, the ending of the Mainland female actress' career take-off stands in clear contrast to the tragic but encouraging ending of *C'est la vie, mon chéri* released in 1993. In the latter, the optimistic female character eventually succumbed to cancer and left her lover a note saying “if the worst part of life is death, what else should we be afraid of?”— solace to Hong Kong of early 1990s in a pre-1997

apocalyptic mood. Ten years after the PRC “takeover”, the “unchanged” Hong Kong, as protected by the “one country, two systems” promise, is shaken and shocked by the change in the Mainland, while as for the film industry, the change may well pose a threat to Hong Kong’s cultural superiority.

Early in 2002, when Hong Kong filmmakers were still lobbying at Beijing for the opening of the mainland market to Hong Kong movies, Laikwan Pang (2002a: 64) had already suggested:

A real ‘unification’ of Hong Kong and China’s film markets, as I have suggested, might ultimately assimilate the former into the latter. Hong Kong’s film companies are urging China to consider them as its own, yet the differences between the two industries are crucial if Hong Kong wishes to claim cultural superiority. Given the interdependence of cultural capital and economic organisation, the desire on both sides for a ‘free circulation’ of capital performing under the ‘one-way’ flow of cultural imagination is inherently contradictory. Hong Kong films have worked for Chinese audiences mainly because of their facility in addressing the imagination of an audience on the cusp of China’s modernisation-globalisation discursive contour. The disappearance of difference that such sophisticated hindsight produces will also dissolve market potential.

As a cultural scholar, Pang’s misgivings about Hong Kong cinema’s market potential in Mainland China was out of concern for ideological differences between Hong Kong and the PRC, as she asserted at the end of her article that “the final result may be the neutralisation of the Hong Kong film industry, and the loss of the companies that took

the risk at China's behest" (Pang, 2002a: 65). However, since the CEPA took effect, the Mainland influence on Hong Kong cinema seems more economic than political. Starting from 2002, the scale and speed of a new round of commercialisation reform of the mainland Chinese film industry was beyond general anticipation, with the result so far is remarkably impressive. In 2002, the order of the new Regulations on Administration of Films allowing private capital to enter the film production sector had abolished the state monopoly in production, and the campaign of introducing a movie-theatre chain system reactivated the moribund film market. Followed by four other new regulations issued at the end of 2003, respectively on film censorship, co-production management, market entry permit and foreign capital in theatre construction, the commercialisation measures, as mentioned earlier, have led to an increase in the box office takings of Chinese films by 20 per cent annually (including co-productions), according to Zhang Hongsen, Deputy Director of the Film Bureau of China's State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) (*Xinhua News*, 2008).

The gradual relaxation of government regulation and the lucrative market have attracted more private capital into the mainland film industry and accelerated the assimilation of the Hong Kong film industry. In October 2007, Golden Harvest, a leading figure in Hong Kong's film industry since the 1970s, was sold to Mainland-based Orange Sky Entertainment Group, a private film and television program production company founded in 2004. The two companies merged and renamed as Orange Sky Golden Harvest in early 2009 to restart the film-making business that Golden Harvest had dropped in 2003 (Orange Sky Website, 2009). This unprecedented acquisition and merger marked a breakthrough deal in the mainland Chinese film production history. Soon in September 2009, Huayi Brothers Media Group Corporation, the largest private owned film production and distribution company in China, became the first major

Mainland Chinese film studio to list on a stock exchange in the PRC, followed in 2010 by Beijing Polybona Film Distribution Co. Even the China Film Group, the leading state-owned studio, is expecting to list on the stock exchange in China.

Eight years after Laikwan Pang (2002a) had pointed out that “the differences between the two industries are crucial if Hong Kong wishes to claim cultural superiority”, she noted that “Its (Hong Kong cinema) success in the twentieth century was marked by the cultural and economic ‘irrelevance’ of Chinese mainland cinema; and, ironically, its recent downturn is in part a result of the rise of mainland commercial cinema” (Pang, 2010). As in the movie *My Name is Fame*, where the young and perky Mainland actress stimulates resurgence in the middle-aged Hong Kong actor’s career, off the screen the vibrant atmosphere in the renascent commercial mainland Chinese film industry has encouraged a self-repositioning of Hong Kong cinema within the reconfiguration of the Chinese-language film industry. The earlier irresolute stance of “in-between going ‘back’ to and staying ‘out’ of China” (Wong, 2002), which had resulted in dislocation and disorientation, is being replaced by a more pragmatic gesture of moving northward to the mainland rather than just “Looking Northward to the Mainland”.

Only two years after the inception of the CEPA, Hong Kong cinema saw an increasing number of Beijing-based Hong Kong filmmakers engaged in making Chinese-language films for the Chinese nation. This all-encompassing Chinese-language film is replacing the parochial made-in-Hong Kong, exported-to-the-Mainland film, which used to demarcate intentionally the Mainland “other” and Hong Kong “self”. Even to those who keep staying in Hong Kong to make films, in their films, the Mainland-Hong Kong distinction is diluted with the assimilation and domestication of Mainland actresses.

3. Mainland Actresses as Hallmark in the Era of Integration

In the “golden years” of Hong Kong cinema in 1980s, Hong Kong films had dominated the Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries in terms of box office revenue, and Esther Yau criticised Hong Kong cinema for being “a part of the media hegemonies” in these regions (Yau, 2001: 5). She argued that Hong Kong cinema has been “competing with Hollywood for Chinese audiences and for overseas markets”, and for decades, it has shown a “hegemonic presence” in Taiwan and Southeast Asian markets “without attending to these cultures” (Yau, 2001: 5). However, in the post-CEPA era, Laikwan Pang (2010a: 140) noted that the prevalent option in Hong Kong cinema was to make big-budget Putonghua (Mandarin) co-productions and even to move the operation to the Mainland “owing to lower costs and cultural proximity to the potential audience”. This strategy, as Pang (2010a: 140-141) sees it, is portending “the possible demise of Hong Kong cinema as a cultural industry; as talent and operations are drained from the area (Hong Kong)”. It can otherwise be read as an attempt by these Hong Kong filmmakers to get to know and understand the once “estranged” Mainland China where the future of Hong Kong cinema is embedded. The phrase “brain-drain” actually could not quite capture the contingency of the current talent flows between Hong Kong and mainland China, as these Hong Kong filmmakers are unlikely to stay in Beijing for good, while a recent counter-flow of Mainland filmmakers, mostly award winning actresses, has obtained Hong Kong residence through the Hong Kong government’s Quality Migrant Admission Scheme initiated in 2006, which adds complexity to the issue.

3.1 Northward Hong Kong Filmmakers: Making Sense of the Changing Mainland

The prevailing concern about Hong Kong filmmakers going north to make co-

productions and to put more emphases on the Mainland market is these Hong Kong films' lack of direct relevance, or even, increasingly, irrelevance, to Hong Kong. The majority of these co-productions, especially successful ones, brought back handsome revenue and awards, such as Peter Chan's *The Warlords* (Tou Ming Zhuang, 2007), Gordon Chan's *Painted Skin* (2008), and John Woo's *Red Cliff* (2008), are all big-budget productions set in a historical epoch following the examples of Taiwanese director Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and mainland director Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002). The costume dramas set in ancient China have become the benchmarks for Mainland-Hong Kong film industrial integration as a strategy to exploit the cultural commonality based on a shared pre-1949 Chinese history, and to underscore the difference between Hong Kong and the Mainland having been, still, separated by "two systems".

Meanwhile, a few Hong Kong filmmakers have also pioneered experimentation with subject matter in contemporary urban China in an effort to capture its rapid change, and to catch the pulse of the economic dynamism of which they desperately want to be beneficiaries. However, most of these attempts were not successful in terms of their grasp of mainland China as the topic. For example, Stanley Kwan's *Everlasting Regret* (*Chang Heng Ge*, 2005) was a total box office disaster, despite his previous two internationally acclaimed movies about 1930s Shanghai — *Centre Stage* (a.k.a. *Actress, Ruan Ling Yu*) (1992) and *Red Rose, White Rose* (*Hong Mei Gui, Bai Mei Gui*, 1994). This movie tried to cover a woman's turbulent life in Shanghai from the 1940s to 1980s, which occurred mostly in the early history of Mao's communist China. The casting of a Hong Kong Cantonese popular music star Sammi Cheng in the leading role has been deemed inappropriate and made the movie look unreal. The reception of the film was disappointing as the Hong Kong audience is not interested in "Mainland" film, while

the Mainland audience can hardly identify with the Hong Kong-flavored representation of Shanghai in the PRC era. Moreover, the failure of *Everlasting Regret* (2005) has revealed the fact that despite the feverish trend of film co-production with the Mainland, to many Hong Kong filmmakers the word “Mainland” is still more of a historical, political conception than a geographical location to which they can simply relocate themselves and their studios.

To those who did get a better grasp of the social situations in the Mainland, there arose debates or disputes about how to determine the Hong Kong nature or flavour in these contemporary urban movies set in Beijing, Shanghai or other mainland cities. These are fairly irrelevant to Hong Kong except for being directed by Hong Kong filmmakers with a few Hong Kong stars. Stephen Chiau Sing-chi’s science fiction comedy *CJ7* (*Chang Jiang Qi Hao*, 2008), about a poor labourer and his son living in a Mainland city, was fairly well received in the Mainland market thanks to its continued unique Hong Kong *mo-lei-tau* (gibberish, nonsense) comedy style. However, from the responses of the Hong Kong side, the changing story background to the Mainland is regarded as a disappointing straying from Hong Kong cinema since the overwhelming appeal of Chiau as a local comedy king has come from his “decidedly Hong Kong flavour” (Bordwell, 2000: 76) and his contribution in “shaping contemporary Hong Kong identity” (Strokes & Hoover, 1999: 251). Having been transplanted to the Mandarin production, Chiau’s parodic, farcical comedy, which had been canonised as “a site of Hong Kong identity formation” (Lai, 2001: 232), immediately lost favour in Hong Kong although the mainland girl, Xu Jiao, he chose to play the role of his son, soon became a sought-after newcomer actress in Hong Kong.

The only generally acknowledged artistic, if not commercial, breakthrough in Hong

Kong filmmakers' handling of the topic of the urban mainland is Ann Hui's comedy drama *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (*Yi Ma de Hou Xian Dai Sheng Huo*, 2007), an adaptation of a mainland novel based on a real life story about a retired woman's life in today's Shanghai. The small budget movie won Ann Hui another Best Director at HKFA in 2008 and mainland actress Siqin Gaowa the Best Actress. Seen as a continuation of her 1995 awards-winning film *Summer Snow* (*Nv Ren Si Shi*, Literally: *Woman in Forties*), this movie, about a woman in her fifties, has demonstrated Hui's unswerving investigation of women's lives and sentiments, and "continued interest in the plight of displaced persons within various social contexts and the experience of exile" (Erens, 2000: 180). "My aunt" in the movie is an embodiment of a type of ordinary person who has been cast away by the tides of history, and living a "jumbled" life in a rapidly changing society.

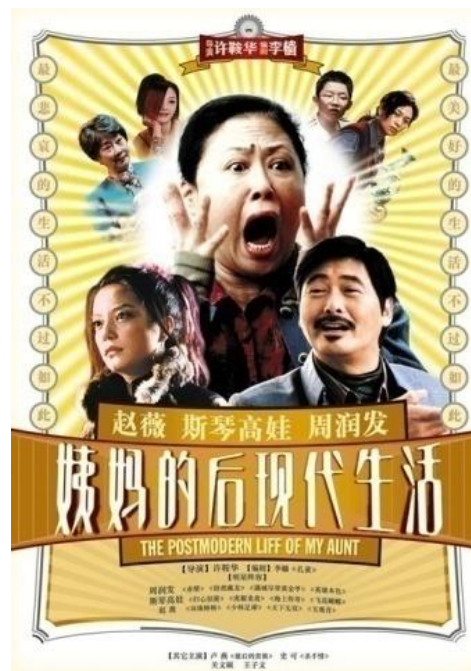


Figure 4.6 Movie poster of *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2007)

starring Mainland actress Siqin Gaowa (middle) and Hong Kong megastar Chow Yun-fat (right)

As the scriptwriter Li Qiang explained in an interview (Sina.com.cn, 2007), her

understanding of “postmodern” in the movie title referred to a state that people feel when the value and outlook they used to depend on has collapsed, the hierarchy of social classes has been overturned, and the people are ideologically confused as their understandings of the world are being constantly tampered with and toppled. This is not only a fairly realistic portraiture of present day mainland China as the once implanted high ideal of communism having been uprooted by the newly adopted and embraced capitalist market economy and consumerism, but also a reflection of Hong Kong embodied in Hong Kong cinema that has long been classified as “in a postmodern phase”, although the timing and consequences has been disputed.

As David Bordwell (2000) noted, the Hong Kong local critics have either taken 1984 with the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, or the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, as the beginning of postmodernism in Hong Kong cinema, as the local cinema has turned to “shameless commercial entertainment” or “expressed the public urge to escape into nostalgia and nonsense, emblematised in a series of parodic retro films and Stephen Chiau’s *mo-lei-tau* (‘gibberish’) comedy” (p.44). Moreover, as Evan Chan (2000: 22) in his article *Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema* contended, “Hong Kong’s postmodern visibility, while a confluence of several narratives, was catalysed by the 1997 colonisation cutoff date” as:

the very fact that the British handover of Hong Kong to China now seems so anti-climactic should be viewed through the postmod[ern] grid of global capitalism. The doomsday scenario — heavy-handed intervention by China — hasn’t really happened. China’s more or less hands-off approach should probably be interpreted as an index of its entrenchment in the forward march of developmentalism, to which a threat to Hong Kong might be too serious a

disruption to contemplate, yet.

(Chan, 2000: 22)

Chan (2000: 40) contends that “moving from the old century into the new one, postmodernism seems still fairly young and post-colonial Hong Kong is a mere infant.” His argument coincides with that of another Hong Kong scholar Linda Lai. Lai (2001: 240) also held that the key component of postmodernism lies in “the erosion of the modern ideas of irreversible, unidirectional historical progress”. She invoked Fredric Jameson’s words to dispute the idea of viewing the 1990s Hong Kong movies, especially the nostalgia or nonsense movies, which Teo (1997: 246) also described as “one manifestation in the multi-faceted grid of the postmodernist edifice.” Lai (2001: 241) argues that in the 1990s, Hong Kong was “still very much driven by its own success story” and by no means “a revolt against the modernist phase of authoritative grand narratives” – a postmodern condition according to Fredric Jameson. In this sense, the present mainland China undergoing an economic take-off is more akin to 1990s Hong Kong. Therefore, the postmodern life of the Shanghai aunt is a self-reflexive product of Hong Kong in the post-colonial or post-changeover, but, more importantly, post-CEPA era in the context of China’s economic take-off and the Hong Kong-Mainland economic integration incarnated in the co-produced films.

Moreover, as the only spark in the historical epic-dominated co-productions, the success of *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* has also somehow toned down the controversy over the labeling of Hong Kong cinema, and the co-produced Chinese-language cinema has become a more acceptable and supported concept. Another term “pure Hong Kong movie” is more often mentioned to describe those medium- or small-budget regional productions focusing mainly on the Hong Kong domestic market and seeing the

Mainland market as only a “bonus,” as the share of box office revenue for an imported movie is only 13 to 15 per cent, much less than 45 per cent for a co-production, as previously mentioned. These non-co-productions, according to the CEPA, can be imported to the Mainland as a foreign product though exemption from the import quota as a privilege of being a SAR of China.

3.2 Southward Mainlanders: Making the Best of the Unchanged SAR

“As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world.”

Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*

(1938:125)

Although Hong Kong film industry’s inextricable connection with the Mainland market has resulted in a northbound trend of the local film workers, Hong Kong itself, as a SAR enjoying considerable freedom under the protection of “one country, two systems,” has remained a magnet for Mainland ones. Since the Hong Kong government initiated the points-based Quality Migrant Admission Scheme to attract top talent in 2006, many Mainland professionals, as well as celebrities such as pianists, athletes and most of all, award-winning movie stars, have become Hong Kong citizens. The official explanation for their preference for a Hong Kong passport is unanimously the convenience of travelling, since a Hong Kong passport enjoys preferable visa policies in many countries to those pertaining to the PRC. However, this decision is also a reflection of these celebrities’ confidence and trust in Hong Kong operated in another system differentiated from the Mainland. Given the Mainland’s increasing marketisation tendency, the major difference that separates the two, and serves as a cornerstone for

Hong Kong's stability is the retained British-derived legal system, especially the independence of the judiciary based on the rule of law, in contrast to the ubiquitous intervention by the executive authorities in the Mainland.

On March 21, 2010, a non-co-produced, small budget Hong Kong urban romantic drama film *Crossing Hennessy* (*Yue Man Xuan Ni Shi*) was premiered at the 34th Hong Kong International Film Festival Opening Ceremony, and was later publicly exhibited in the Mainland theatres as an imported Hong Kong film. The movie was warmly received as “a pure Hong Kong film” in both markets and its female lead – Mainland actress Tang Wei — was hailed for her comeback to the silver screen as a Hong Kong citizen, after her two-year exile due to an undocumented and alleged banning in early 2008 by the SARFT.

As discussed in chapter three, Tang had vaulted into international prominence after her cooperation with Oscar winning director Ang Lee in his 2007 film *Lust, Caution* (*Se Jie*), and was also dragged into a career impasse as she was blacklisted by the SARFT due to her performance in this controversial movie, with explicit sex scenes and its alleged tendency of “glorification of traitors and insulting to patriots” (Chu, 2008) though the Mainland theatrical version was a censored “clean” one with the seven minutes of sex scenes completely removed. Since the director Ang Lee is from Taiwan and the co-star Tony Leung Chiu-wai is from Hong Kong SAR, in this pan-Chinese production the mainland actress Tang Wei was obviously the most vulnerable in being subject to the PRC's administrative rule. Since early 2008, her commercials were withdrawn from all mainland television stations and the televised film award shows were advised to exclude her. Such an explicit but undocumented punishment specifically targeting an actress sparked a backlash all over the country. A petition to

stop the ban on Tang Wei signed by lawyers, entertainment and media industry people, academics and citizens was soon circulating online (Mu, 2008: n.pag.), and director Ang Lee publicly stated that he was very disappointed about the decision that disadvantaged Tang Wei. He also added that “She gave one of the greatest performances ever in a movie that was properly produced and distributed. We will do everything we can to support her in this difficult time” (as cited in BBC News, 10 March 2008).

After the two-year hiatus, under the meticulous planning of her agency, Hong Kong EDKO Films, Tang Wei has successfully come back as a Hong Kong SAR actress in a “pure” Hong Kong production. This incident is just one of the many examples of people or companies taking advantage of the current “two systems” arrangement to pursue their careers thwarted in the mainland China, where the rule of law is yet fully to be established. In early 2010, Google’s partial withdrawal from China is another example of this “big legal trick: redirecting mainland Chinese users to a Hong Kong site [which] avoids the legal trouble of an uncensored Chinese Google site, without depriving users” (Nosowitz, 2010: n.pag.).



Figure 4.7 Movie poster of *Crossing Hennessy* (2010), non-co-produced Hong Kong film which features actress Tang Wei’s comeback as a newly immigrated Hong Kong resident

As a non-coproduction, the movie *Crossing Hennessy* is not bound by the one-third Mainland Chinese cast stipulation in the CEPA, and Tang Wei's appearance in it is no longer a necessity to fulfill that requirement, not to mention that she is now officially a Hong Kong citizen. After being blacklisted on the Mainland, she obtained Hong Kong citizenship through the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme because of her Best New Performer Award granted at the 2007 Taiwan Golden Horse Film Award for her role in *Lust, Caution*. In *Crossing Hennessy*, Tang plays the role of a local "girl next door" living in Hennessy Road in the centre of Hong Kong Island, and speaks fluent Cantonese, though slightly accented, but acceptable to the local audience since Hong Kong has always been a city of immigrants and expatriates.

To some extent, the flexibility of the label "Hong Kong film" reaches beyond its tolerance of less pure Cantonese to many topics unfairly treated or excluded from the Mainland. Despite the aforementioned dispute over determining the Hong Kong quality in those movies with a mainland setting, Stanley Kwan's gay-themed movie *Lan Yu* (2001), based on a real tragic love story in 1980s Beijing, has been unambiguously received as a Hong Kong product, as both the gay theme and the delicate reference to the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown in the movie are still taboos within the Mainland. One of the leading actors in this film, Hu Jun, was the second Mainland film star to obtain Hong Kong citizenship through the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme following actress Zhang Ziyi (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon; 2006*), the 2005 HKFA Best Actress recipient (Xinhua.com, 2008).

In fact, all of the four mainland background winners for Best Actress at HKFA from 2005 to 2008 are no longer PRC citizens: Zhang Ziyi and Zhou Xun (*Perhaps Love*) have both assumed Hong Kong residence after receiving their HKFA awards, while

Siqin Gaowa (*The Postmodern Life of My Aunt*) has been a Swiss citizen since the 1980s, and Gong Li became a Singaporean citizen in 2008. The only mainland-born HKFA Best Actor winner (2008 for *The Warlords*), *kung fu* star Jet Li, had also recently renounced his PRC citizenship for a Singaporean one. Behind this celebrity emigration trend is a general elite emigration pattern in today's "fast-rising" China, as the provocative assertion popular in the Internet in China goes, "all Chinese who earn more than 120,000 yuan [about US\$17,650] a year want to immigrate" (W. Lam, August 5, 2010). In China, these people are mostly professionals and experts with a middle-class background, which allows them to meet the skilled migration criteria in developed countries such as Australia and Canada. Emigration, used to be regarded as a way of pursuing a better material life, is now gradually being accepted in China as a way to look for better personal career opportunities, more cultural freedom or a sense of security for the future. Although Hong Kong is technically not a foreign country, in terms of socioeconomic system, and especially a legal system, the SAR is obviously an alternative, outside world that many Mainlanders yearn for.

Before the opening up policy being adopted in 1978, the PRC had been disconnected with the rest of the world for decades. Once the Mainland was re-opened up, the attraction of the outside world has long been haunting Mainland society and its cinematic imaginary. Hong Kong producer director Peter Chan Ho-sun's first Mainland production *Perhaps Love*, which gained its mainland-background female lead Zhou Xun two Best Actress Awards from HKFA and Taiwan Golden Horse Film Awards, has precisely captured that sentiment in the early 1990s mainland through a mosaic life story of a mainland female star. As the lyrics of the Mandarin theme song *Outside* sung by Zhou Xun go:

*The world outside is so exciting
If I go out there will I fail?
The world outside is so generous
As long as I can get there I shall survive
Staying here I can't feel the moment
I am determined to go out for my future*

*The world outside is so exciting
I will become attractive when I get there
Outside the opportunities come thick and fast
I will definitely find my own existence
Once I left I shall never turn back
When I leave I will never come back.*



Figure 4.8 Movie poster of *Perhaps Love* (2005)starring Mainland actress Zhou Xun (right) and three actors from Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan/Japan (left to right): Ji Jin-Hee, Jacky Cheung and Takeshi Kaneshiro

As “a rare example of a musical fashioned as an art film in the Hong Kong and Chinese cinemas”, *Perhaps Love* (2005) became a big hit thanks to “its elaborate and flamboyant mixture of musical numbers, romance and a film-within-a-film” (Teo, 2008: 352). However, the lavish masquerade of musical genre diverted the film critics from

the plotline and theme. Most of the discussions on this movie are about the pan-Asian production mode (Bollywood choreography, Korean movie star together with Hong Kong, Taiwanese and mainland ones), and the musical genre aesthetics (V. Lee, 2009: 200-208; Teo, 2008). Some critics had rebuked these award-winning film songs as a “hurdle to the film’s appreciation by non-Chinese-speaking audiences” while admitting that they are “a significant part of the script” (V. Lee, 2009: 202). In fact, these overlooked movie songs in *Perhaps Love* are not merely an ambience enhancer for the exotic Mainland setting, but an important narrative mechanism, just as in Peter Chan’s earlier classic Hong Kong movie *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996). The Chinese title of *Comrades*, *Tian Mi Mi* (literally: *Sweetness*) comes from a popular Mandarin song by Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng in the early 1980s. In this movie, the old song functions as the vehicle for nostalgia, narrative coherence and the contemplation and narration of “a fluid trans-Chinese identity” (Lo, 2001: 271) in the story about two Mainlanders’ struggling lives all the way through Hong Kong to New York in the 1980s. Similarly in *Perhaps Love*, director Peter Chan again resorted to well-known pop songs in his effort to portray the fortitude of Mainland women struggling to make their way to the outside world. Rather than simply add a pop song to the movie as its theme song, *Perhaps Love* has demonstrated a perfect combination of the diegetic use of a 1980s pop song and the non-diegetic original film theme song.

As the story is set in the restless 1980s when Mainland China has just been opened up to the outside world after decades of self-isolation, the diegetic pop song *The Outside is So Exciting* (*Wai Mian De Shi Jie Hen Jing Cai*) by Taiwanese singer Chyi Chin serves as an indication of the time setting, and as a revelation of the character’s ambition. Meanwhile, the non-diegetic theme song *Outside* sung by the leading actress Zhou Xun, reinforces her characterisation of the ambitious actress. Moreover, the onscreen story

about the trajectory of the Mainland movie star is actually a reflection of the off screen life of Zhou Xun, an actress who, like the character she played, has come from a small city to Beijing to start as a cabaret singer and has risen to be a super movie star. Zhou Xun herself is the first Chinese actress who had won Best Actress Awards at all major film awards across the Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan, for which now the Hong Kong film industry can take credit as she is a Hong Kong permanent resident.

Conclusion:

In the post-1997 era, Hong Kong cinema has been inextricably connected to the Mainland in terms of the film market, capital and talent. The emergence of mainland actresses in post-1997 HKC is a result of Hong Kong cinema shifting its target market to the Mainland and has resulted in speeding up the integration of Hong Kong and Mainland cinemas. Through the examination of the original of Hong Kong-mainland film cooperation since the early 1980s, the changing filmic representation of mainland women in Hong Kong cinema, and the evolving role of Mainland actresses in the Hong Kong film industry, the rise of the mainland actress from obscure supporting role of “Kong Girl” to an assimilated Hong Kong girl both— on and off the screen— has paralleled the trajectory of the privatisation and commercialisation reform of mainland film industry, and of China’s incorporation into the global economy. Moreover, the changing configuration of the Hong Kong and Mainland film industries in their integration process is epitomised in the roles and functions of these Mainland actresses from a token of co-production to a stepping stone of transformation of both film industries and, finally, has become the hallmark of the integration. The filmic representation of Mainland prostitutes and country girls to promising actresses, along with those dramatic real life anecdotes in the career paths of actresses like Gong Li,

Tang Wei and Zhou Xun, are quintessential examples of this decades'-long co-operation, co-production and integration process between Hong Kong and Mainland cinemas.

Although the expanding Mainland market has become the centre of gravity in the Hong Kong film industry and cultural affinity is acting as a centripetal force towards the more general Chinese-language cinema, the social, political discrepancies between the “two systems” which still separate Mainland and Hong Kong as two regions has ensured some space for Hong Kong cinema beyond the co-production. Moreover, the contingent and complex talent flow between the two industries has reaffirmed Hong Kong's status as a place of Chinese sojourners where the articulation of a local cultural identity and the meaning of Chineseness are further problematised. Most of all, the “Mainlandisation” trend of Hong Kong cinema has raised doubt about the promise to “keep Hong Kong unchanged for fifty years” under the “one country, two systems” policy.

As the Hong Kong film industry has shifted its main focus onto the burgeoning Mainland market, is it possible for Hong Kong cinema remain “unchanged” by the other “system”? In the following chapter, I will focus on those “not made for the PRC” Hong Kong films and explicate how Hong Kong filmmakers work to make films without the consideration of the Mainland in an effort to keep Hong Kong cinema unchanged.

I will demonstrate in the following chapter Hong Kong cinema's not so successful effort of competing Hollywood in global appeal, Hong Kong filmmakers' reluctant but eventually reconcile attitude towards the integration with the PRC (cinema), and the perseverance in retaining a strong local Hong Kong cultural identity. I will argue that

the global expansion of Hollywood has partially caused the decline of Hong Kong cinema since the mid-1990s, and further resulted in its dependence on the nascent Mainland film market. However, despite the general trend of Hong Kong-Mainland film co-production, to some extent, the “one country, two systems” arrangement has indeed guaranteed the “Hong Kong specificity” in the small number of non-co-produced films targeting at its local market.

Chapter Three

“One Movie, Two Versions”:

Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema in Mainland China

The best thing brought about by the reunification with mainland China to the Hong Kong film industry is the access to the burgeoning Chinese mainland market exempt from the import quota, since technically, they belong to “one country” now. However, the fact of being under “two systems” has caused many unexpected challenges to the quasi-domestic Hong Kong film industry seeking profit in the Mainland. The “one movie, two versions” syndrome is the most attention-getting phenomenon or problem in Hong Kong cinema’s exploration of the new market. In fact, for the consideration of either censorship or commercial interests, multiple-versions have long been adapted as a survival tactic by the export-oriented business mechanism of Hong Kong cinema. However, the numerous Chinese mainland-only versions with substantive changes have aroused scholarly interest in the impact of the “one country, two systems” policy imposed on Hong Kong since 1997.

This chapter seeks to explore the interrelationship between the “one movie, two versions” phenomenon and the “one country, two systems” policy by posing the following questions: To what extent is the long-standing multiple-versions practice in Hong Kong cinema influenced and scaled upwards by this unprecedented formula? How does the phenomenon reflect the transitional nature of post-1997 Hong Kong

cinema and affect its future direction? I will argue that the two-version phenomenon is a result of the economic collaboration between the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR) and the PRC as “one country”, and also that it is a reflection of the ideological divergence of the two operating systems. Moreover, under the challenge of pirated “authentic” versions, the number of Mainland alternative versions is recently decreasing as Hong Kong filmmakers are trying hard to restore the trust of the mainland Chinese audience by presenting them with the same version as those released in HKSAR through self-censorship. Therefore, this “one movie, two versions” phenomenon, as a peculiar means of survival of the Hong Kong cinema in mainland China, is gradually evolving into a permanent inclination of Hong Kong cinema of China.

Why Should We Care About the Cut Version?

In 2007, the China Film Archive and China Film Research Centre organised a symposium on Hong Kong Cinema themed “Integration and Development” to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Hong Kong’s reunification with the PRC. The conference proceedings are published as a book titled *Ten Years of Hong Kong Cinema* (W.Y. Zhang, 2007). Among the over 30 papers in the book, a very short paragraph has given a delicate touch to the “two versions” phenomenon as it reduces the complicated problem into a one sentence explanation: “... since the film rating system in the PRC is yet to come, some Hong Kong-China co-productions sometimes get stuck in the examination and approval procedures...” and the flexibility of pragmatic Hong Kong filmmakers is highly praised as they creatively adapted this two-version strategy (W.Y. Zhang, 2007: 66). The focus of the mainland scholars on post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has unsurprisingly been on how the Hong Kong film industry is revitalising itself in the

newly-claimed motherland/mainland market (J.F. Zhang, 2007; Zhou & Zhao, 2008), but stops short of analysing this problem as the topic is sensitive and awkward.

Meanwhile, scholars outside the Mainland seldom touch on the topic in depth due to a lack of personal experience and access to first-hand materials (the Mainland versions are only available in the Mainland and dubbed in Mandarin). Some have noticed the two versions phenomenon but stopped at lamenting the fading uniqueness of Hong Kong movies and worrying about the negative impact of the 1997 change of political regime (Chan, 2007; Lie, 2008). In contrast to the inadequate concern and investigation in academia, there has been a heated debate over the phenomenon among the general populace, in the form of personal blogs, film reviews, and forum discussions. The audiences, film fans and film critics have mainly brought up three factors to blame for the dual-version “cultural freak” (Xu, 2009) under “one country, two systems”: the lack of film classification regime in PRC (Martinsen, 2005), the conservativeness and fatuousness of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) of the PRC (Gongyuan1874, 2009), and the speculation and opportunism of Hong Kong cinema (Cen, 2009).

Since the Mainland alternative versions of many Hong Kong movies are often fragmented in structure, incoherent in plot and farfetched in character development, they have long become the target of public criticism. However, the alternative mainland version should not be disregarded or discarded like “a malformed twin brother” of the authentic Hong Kong movie, as a mainland media practitioner Xu (2009: n.pag.) maintains in his essay “Hong Kong Cinema as Transborder Visuality”:

Some Hong Kong filmmakers ...are persistently exploring the historical and

cultural identities of Hong Kong through the images, and questioning the interrelationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland. Though their movies are screened in heavily cut and edited version in the mainland, the distorted versions still contain subversive “fissures” (the author’s emphasis). On the other hand, we cannot simplify the problem between mainland censorship and Hong Kong cinema as unilateral castration or rape imposed on the less privileged by the dominating ideology. In fact, through repairing these Hong Kong movies, the Mainland are also imagining, creating and reconstructing her understanding of Hong Kong identity and the bilateral relations.

Xu advocates the contrast and comparison of the two versions so as to “thoroughly understand the complicated operation of power” while he does a brief textual analysis on two series *Infernal Affairs* trilogy (*Wu Jian Dao*, 2002-2003) and *Election 1 & 2* (*Hei She Hui 1 & 2*, 2005, 2007) to demonstrate how they serve as political allegories of Hong Kong. Though not addressing the two-versions phenomenon directly, two articles by Hong Kong-based scholars have provided valuable theoretical and statistical materials on the postcolonial Hong Kong cinema and Mainland film marketisation – the two parties involved in our research of “one movie, two versions” under “one country, two systems.”

In her article “Postcolonial Hong Kong cinema: utilitarianism and (trans)local”, Laikwan Pang (2007: 424) highlights “a utilitarian form of nationalism” revealed in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema with the tendency of shifting emphasis on the mainland market though it continues to be a foreign one to Hong Kong filmmakers due to “the nation’s geographical and cultural diversity, its volatile censorship, as well as its unpredictable business environment.” Pang (2007: 413) argues that “local Hong Kong

is most concrete when Hong Kong becomes most transnational and dispersed” and the sense of local can be explored in two layers — “the economic trans-local” and “culturally essentialist local”, while the “local is at the core of the transnational” and is “a product of the national/global dispersal of the translocal” (p.427). Pang has based her argument mainly on the polarisation of the blockbusters catering to the Mainland market and the smaller productions aimed primarily at the Hong Kong local market. However, her perspective can also be applied to the study of the “two-versioned” Hong Kong films”: the Mainland-version represents “the economic trans-local” as a result of the utilitarian nationalism, while the “culturally essentialist local” (Pang, 2007: 413) is highlighted in the original version through its differences with the Mainland-version.

Pang’s article offers us a different perspective in understanding post-1997 Hong Kong cinema in its relation to the PRC, while another article “Re-nationalizing China’s film industry: case study on the China Film Group and film marketisation” by Emilie Yeh and Darrell Davis (2008) addresses the tension and dialectics between marketisation and protectionism of Chinese film industry. They argue that the film marketisation is “part of a scheme to utilize the market to consolidate state power” (Yeh & Davis, 2008: 37) and, rather than an economic reform, is more “a political fiat” (p.47). On the basis of that argument, along with their analysis of CEPA (Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Agreement) which entitled Hong Kong films a freer access to the Mainland market, the authors have shown great concern for Hong Kong cinema being redefined “in a market that dwarfs Hong Kong” (Yeh & Davis, 2008: 47).

It is quite true that since the implementation of the CEPA in 2004, when most Hong Kong films started to target the lucrative mainland market, the dual-version phenomenon caused by Mainland market entry regulations and censorship has been put

under the spotlight. The motherland that used to warmly welcome Hong Kong into “one country” has now become overwhelmed by the idea of “two systems” by taking a hard line in the examination and approval of Hong Kong films, officially on the ground of different “aesthetic needs” of mainland and Hong Kong audiences. The “one movie, two versions” phenomenon thus foregrounds the differences between the newly reunited two “nation/regions”, and epitomises the situation of “one country two systems” which Hong Kong cinema is navigating.

Through an institutional analysis, I will put the two versions phenomenon under the framework of the unprecedented “one country, two system” formula which is now practised in Hong Kong. Based on a close examination and comparison of selected films, the media coverage, government reports, film reviews and other literatures, I will demonstrate the general differences between the two versions as the ideological divergence between Hong Kong and PRC, the sides under two systems. Since heavy censorship has driven the authentic versions out of the theatre, the mainland audience turns to alternative viewing platforms such as DVD and the Internet (mainly pirated copies). The illegal digital dissemination of the original movies further complicates the problem in terms of both the ideological confrontation of the “two systems” and the role of Hong Kong cinema in China’s economic reform in the context of its cultural industry transformation. In this sense, apart from elucidating the context, causes and impacts of the phenomenon, the interlocking relationship between market, censorship and piracy will also be explored against the backdrop of the marketisation of the movie industry in China.

1. Two-versions as a Commercial Expediency: a Result of Economic Collaboration

It should be remembered that Hong Kong studios have long been producing multiple versions of films to pass censorship in different environments, such as Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan. PRC presents new challenges for the similar dilemma.

(Davis & Yeh, 2008:105).

The multiple versions for different overseas markets have been a long-tested survival tactic in Hong Kong film history. As an export-oriented industry, Hong Kong cinema has gained its fame substantially through its accurate grasp of the target markets and flexibility in catering to the audiences and the censors in various areas. The shrinkage of traditional markets in Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries after the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis almost broke the industry chain of export-dependent Hong Kong cinema. When exploitation of the new mainland market becomes a matter of life and death, such a reluctant compromise with market entry limitations is totally understandable as a measure of expediency. In this light, since the 1997 reunification, the Hong Kong film industry has begun to shift its attention to the Mainland as its major “overseas” market. Meanwhile, the PRC has also slowly started the marketisation of the once totally state-owned film industry, as its commercial value, apart from its propaganda function, has now been realised and acknowledged. The burgeoning Mainland market needs more movies to attract the audiences back to the theatres, while, vulnerable Hong Kong filmmakers are desperately looking for new markets to keep their cameras rolling. I am going first to briefly address the tradition of using multiple versions in the Hong Kong film industry to accommodate to different

overseas market, and then focus on its abuse in exploiting the Mainland market.

1.1 Multiple Versions as a Survival Tactic of Hong Kong Cinema

Multiple versions are not an unusual practice in film history and it happens throughout the world. Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America* premiered in the competition at the 1984 Cannes Film Festival in its original running time of 229 minutes, but was later commercially released in a version of 129 minutes, cut by the company against the director's will. Although Roger Ebert (1984: n.pag.) wrote in his review that the uncut version was "an epic poem of violence and greed" and described the American theatrical version as a "travesty". In most of the cases, one movie for the critic and one movie for the crowd are not inherently inexcusable since director's cut often serves as a great enticement for movie fans to consume video products after the theatrical release. However, in the case of the export-oriented, entertaining mechanism like Hong Kong cinema, the alternative version is usually made to placate the censors of specific overseas markets.

In early 1990, for the sake of international markets like Europe and other Asian countries, the internationally famous mainland actress Gong Li (who came to international prominence through close collaboration with director Zhang Yimou in *Red Sorghum/Hong Gao Liang*, the Golden Bear winner at the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival) was chosen to co-star with "Hong Kong Jim Carrey" Stephen Chow in a comedy *God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai (Du Xia 2 zhi Shanghai Tan Du Sheng*, 1991), directed by Wong Jing. However, according to the Taiwan film policies of that time, PRC citizens were strictly forbidden to appear on the domestic screens of the ROC (Republic of China), even if the movie was Hong Kong made. Since the Taiwan

market was then the most important market for Hong Kong films from 1984-1995 (Feng, 2003a), a special version for the Taiwan market was made, replacing the mainland actress with the much less famous Taiwanese singer Fang Jiwei. Within one story, a few extra shots using a Taiwanese local actress to meet the import requirements ensured that the cost-return ratio is perfectly calculated and maximised. These are typical Hong Kong tactics for surviving between the gaps of two hostile Chinese regimes across the Taiwan Strait.



Figure 3.1-2 Stills from the two versions of *God of Gamblers III* (1991), starring the Mainland actress Gong Li (left) and the Taiwan actress Fang Jiwei (Right)

Other major overseas markets such as Southeast Asian countries Singapore and Malaysia are also well-known for being strict and conservative in their film censorship. Taking *Young and Dangerous* (*Gu Huo Zai*, 1996) by Andrew Lau as an example, the triad leader Chan Ho Nam was changed to be a police undercover agent in the Malaysian version as the regulation there does not allow the criminal character to get off freely. Another movie by Andrew Lau, *Infernal Affairs* (*Wu Jian Dao*, 2002), which is one of the most influential and well-known post-1997 Hong Kong films, and was remade into the Oscar winning *The Departed* (2006) by Martin Scorsese, also has two different endings available in its DVD release. The original ending climaxes with the death of the undercover policeman, while his murderer, a police-infiltrated Triad member walks off as a free man. Artistically, this ending leaves the audience more

room for reflecting upon life and fate as implied by the Chinese title *Wujian Dao* (literally means “non-stop path,” a reference to a Buddhist term regarding hell). In contrast, the alternative ending conveys a more clear-cut message with the arrest of the murderer “red-handed”. “Good” has to be rewarded while “Bad” needs to be punished in this version. Since *Infernal Affairs* was made in the post-1997 era, many had mistakenly blamed the PRC censors for the faulty ending while, in fact, the film had never been officially screened in the Mainland theatres, but only introduced in the form of DVD. This ending was initially made for the Malaysian market and, as the Head of Media Asia Group John Chong recalled:

In Malaysia they set the rules not allowing criminals to be at large in the movies. In shooting *Infernal Affairs*, I called Andrew asking him what we should do if Ming ends up a free man. It turns out our directors are quite experienced with those rules in overseas market and he told me he had already prepared an alternative version as Ming steps out of the elevator hands up and arrested. This ending is also used in the Mainland. Some said it was to accommodate to the restrictions in the Mainland. It was not. It is the market. Only this way can it work in the market.

(as cited from Cheuk, 2008: 82, my translation)

In fact, *Infernal Affairs* had never been officially screened in the mainland theatres, as before 2004 Hong Kong movies were still subject to the 20 per year import quota of PRC and were introduced into the mainland market as “foreign cultural products.” The winner of 2004 Hong Kong Film Award, *Running on Karma (Da Zhi Lao*, the literal Cantonese title of which is *Big Guy*, dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-Fai, 2003) was, for example, introduced to the Mainland as an imported film. However, the fifteen minutes

cut in its mainland public release fundamentally degraded the philosophical, thought-provoking movie to a senseless commercial film selling stars and special effects make-up (a prosthetic muscle suit to make the hero look huge, like Arnold Schwarzenegger). The story of *Running on Karma* unfolds around the protagonist Biggie's unusual ability of seeing karma — a Buddhist teaching on the effects of a person's actions that determine one's destiny in one's reincarnation.

Being a Buddhist monk, Biggie can see another's previous life and foretell the ending in this life. This ability enables him to help his female police friend in a homicide and arrest the murderer since the victim, the murder and a seemingly irrelevant woman, have been long involved from their previous life. At the end of the movie, his female police friend is beheaded while she uses herself as bait to help Biggie find his childhood friend's killer. However, this tragic ending of her life is fundamentally a result of her own karma as being a brutal Japanese soldier during the WWII in her previous life. After her death, Biggie spends five years in meditation in the mountain. His final penetration of the profundity of life is motivated and guided by belief in Karma. However, according to the official ideology of the PRC, this religious doctrine is regarded as superstition and is banned from the silver screen, so all parts conveying or reflecting the idea of karma-- about 15 minutes-- in total are cut from the 98 minute movie. The remaining 83 minute "non-superstitious" story turns out to be superficial, motivated only by an inexplicit secular love between a man and a woman, leaving an illogical and broken plotline for the Mainland audience to be baffled about the story and its successes in both Hong Kong theatres and film festivals.



Figure 3.3 Still from *Running On Karma*, Biggie and the female police officer



Figure 3.4 Still from *Running On Karma*,
Biggie sees the female police officer's karma from her previous life

However, although stringent film censorship in the PRC has caused a greater challenge to the Hong Kong cinema, the compromises made by Hong Kong filmmakers are actually quite rewarding. As Hollywood has already taken the Taiwan market away since the mid-1990s, new market is of paramount importance to the revitalising of Hong Kong film industry. The privileged access to expanding mainland market, therefore, has counterbalanced the pain of coming to terms with PRC censorship, especially when this access is not enjoyed by rival Hollywood.

In the downturn of the Hong Kong film industry that had almost lost all its Southeast

Asia market after the 1998 Asia Financial Crisis, the Mainland appeared to lend a hand with the CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Agreement) implemented since January 1, 2004 (website of Trade and Industry Dept. HKSAR, 2011). The concessions were gradually liberalised in the following years through newly added supplements every year. Before CEPA, Hong Kong films were still regarded as foreign films to the Mainland and had to compete with Hollywood and other foreign movies for the twenty profit-sharing import quota every year (which used to be ten before 2001 China's accession to the WTO), even though since the 1997 handover Hong Kong has become a SAR of the PRC. The unification of sovereignties did not bring the two territories any closer under the two systems, and its influence on the Hong Kong film industry seemed not very obvious in the first few years after the handover, as Hong Kong films were kept outside the mainland China market. However, through the efforts of the Hong Kong filmmakers after sending delegations to Beijing to negotiate the "national status" of Hong Kong cinema in the PRC, the preferential policies on mainland distribution and exhibition of Hong Kong films are included in the CEPA. Hong-Kong-made Chinese-language films can be imported to mainland China on a profit-sharing basis exempt from the annual 20 foreign film quota, and co-productions with the mainland can be distributed as domestic films in China. In terms of box office revenue, only 15 per cent goes to profit-sharing imports but 45 per cent goes to the co-productions (Wei, 2006). This was to be a stimulant to the failing Hong Kong film industry.

In fact, just as desperately as Hong Kong film industry needed the new market of the Mainland, the Mainland also needed Hong Kong cinema to fuel its marketisation of the moribund state-owned film industry. Under a Leninist structure, the Chinese film industry used to serve only as party-government propaganda in the PRC, as film production depended heavily on the government subsidy without much consideration of

commercial value. However, with the adaptation of a market economy since the early 1990s, the commercial value of films has been gradually realised and emphasised. As mentioned earlier, the import quota for foreign films (mainly Hollywood films) was doubled because of China's entry into the WTO in 2001. Accordingly, from 2002, a top-down, "Great Leap Forward"-like campaign of establishing a national theatre chain system was launched in an effort to improve the infrastructure for film exhibition. In this theatre building and renovating campaign, Hong Kong capital and management experience have taken a leading role. According to the CEPA, Hong Kong service suppliers are permitted to construct, renovate and operate cinema theatres in the Mainland on an equity joint venture or contractual joint venture basis (the Hong Kong stakes allowed have gone up from 50 per cent in the beginning to fully-owned at present).

By the end of 2009, China has established altogether 34 theatre chains with nearly 5000 screens, a five times increase in eight years. The total box office revenue has risen from less than 1 billion RMB in 2002 to 6.2 billion RMB (about 0.9 billion USD) in 2009, with an average annual increase of about 25 per cent, and the rate of increase in the year 2009 was as high as 43 per cent (Xinhua news agency, 2010). The profit increases in the Mainland film industry are the result of mutually beneficial economic collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. However, the unexpected and still yet-to-be-solved side products are large numbers of "mutated" Hong Kong films screened in the Mainland theatres which diminish the reputation of Hong Kong cinema. The above-mentioned *Running on Karma* is only one example of the removing the prohibited content (karma as superstition) for its Mainland version. In fact, there are various ways of making Hong Kong films "Mainland-acceptable".

1.2 Metamorphosis of Hong Kong Movies in the Mainland

In 2004, among those films that first hit the mainland theatres under CEPA, *The Inescapable Snare* (from China coproduction website) or *Ensnared*, translated by Martinsen (2005) (*Tian Luo Di Wang*, literally meaning an escape-proof dragnet) was one of such. It is a very cost-effective repackaging of a 2003 Hong Kong film *Naked Ambition* (*Hao Qing*, dir. Dante Lam & Chan Hing Kai, 2003). Similar to an American film *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (dir. Miloš Forman, 1996) about a pornographic magazine publisher, the original Hong Kong version tells a story about two young college graduates who overcome bias and prejudice to rise from miserable magazine writers and editors to big shots in the local porn industry. It was rated as Category-III in Hong Kong (equivalent to an NC-17, adult only film) due to the nudity and obscenity. In order to enjoy the preferential treatment brought by the CEPA, the pragmatic and adaptable Hong Kong studio cleverly remade it into a normative Mainland-Hong Kong co-production. The “indecent” rags to riches story of “porn kings” was “whitewashed” into an educative morality tale on how Hong Kong police, together with Mainland Public Security Ministry, crack down on pornographic publications and prostitution. The supporting role of Hong Kong police officer in the original film becomes the leading hero in the mainland version, assisted by a mainland undercover policewoman who never appears in the Hong Kong version. Obviously, this mainland female role was abruptly squeezed in to fulfill the requirement of the Hong Kong-mainland crew ratio in co-productions. This opportunistic experiment was criticised by a Hong Kong critic as “the most subversive act” and “complete revision of the original ideology” (Yeh, 2009: n.pag.), but more importantly, it reflects the “jerry-building” attitude in quickly taking advantage of the newly claimed “national status” in the Mainland market.



Figure3.5 (left) Movie Posters for an adult-only Hong Kong movie *Naked Ambition* Figure3.6 (right) and its Mainland version, the morality tale *Inescapable Snare*

In fact, since the implementation of the CEPA, the Mainland market has proven to be a gold mine for Hong Kong cinema. In a public talk on Hong Kong-Mainland co-production and the market situation in 2005, the Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers See-Yuen Ng greatly emphasised the advantages of co-producing with the Mainland, and the importance of the mainland market to Hong Kong cinema by comparing the mainland and Hong Kong box office revenues of two films: Wong Kar-wai's *2046* (2004) and Tsui Hark's *Seven Swords* (*Qi Jian*, 2005). Both gained about seven million HK dollars total box office revenue in Hong Kong, while their mainland box office revenue is respectively 35 million and 80 million (Cheung, 2008). Nansun Shi, a senior Hong Kong producer, also pointed out in her speech "Hong Kong as an Asian Co-production Centre" at the American Film Market in Los Angeles in 2006 that in China, "the room for growth and expansion is unimaginable" as China has a population four times that of the American market, while the number of screens was only 2,700 at that time compared to 36,000 in the U.S. (as cited in Pang, 2007). This observation has been proven true as within five years, the number of screens in Mainland China has increased to 8925 by the year 2011 and will reach 11800 by 2012 according to the SARFT (www.dmcc.gov.cn, 2011).

However, at this expanding Mainland market, the films from capitalist Hong Kong could easily be classified as “spiritual pollution” to the supposedly harmonious socialist PRC society. In order to pass the strict screening of the SARFT, quite a few Hong Kong films had carried out at least some or in other cases, many kinds of “cosmetic surgery” (netease.com) self-consciously and voluntarily before making their presence at Mainland theatres. Besides changing to a more uplifting but blunt title, based on the Chinese mainland netizens’ scattered comments on the revised version, these “surgeries” usually include:

1. the overall *detoxification* of the nudity, sex, violence and politically sensitive topics;
2. minor skin *uplifting* (the good gets rewarded and the bad never ends up well—all the criminals will turn themselves in if not be arrested);
3. *bleaching* (characters in the crime movies would unexpectedly reveal their identities as a police undercover in the end, so that all the bad behavior is covered in the name of “seeking justice”);
4. major body treatment like *liposuction* (cutting out the sensitive contents, be it political, religious, or superstitious) or even
5. *bone contouring* (repackaging the whole film almost beyond recognition like turning a crime movie into a anti-crime moral story).

In summary, all these efforts are to serve one goal only— to put a potential “morally contaminating” HKSAR film generally in line with the Central People’s Government. As a spokesman for SARFT explains, “Movies are cultural products, and against China’s particular national background, under a socialist ideology, we must conscientiously carry out the inspections according to our value system” (as cited from Martinsen, 2005: n.pag.).

The Best Film of 2005 Hong Kong Film Award, *One Nite in Mongkok* (*Wang Jiao Hei Ye*, 2004), is a crime thriller about the story of a prostitute and killer struggling for a living in Hong Kong. In order not to antagonise the easily irritated censors, an inter-title was added to indicate that the story happens in 1996, and the two flawed protagonists are from some Southeast Asian countries, though everybody knows from the plot that they are both from the poverty-stricken areas of Mainland China. This device, in fact, exposes what the censors want to hide or refuse to face. Deliberately setting the time in 1996 in crime movies is designed to pretend that all things bad happened in the “corrupted” British Hong Kong era. This is an expansion of the “new society— old society” dichotomy from the PRC to HKSAR (Xu, 2009). In PRC official historiography, the founding of the PRC in 1949 has always been referred to as the watershed between new and old societies, and now in Hong Kong, 1997. Since all the crimes belong to the “old Hong Kong” in 1996, which have nothing to do with the “new” one, the film avoids any suspicion of challenging the sustained stability in post-1997 Hong Kong as part of “new China.” In the end of the movie, a voiceover by the prostitute says, “The encounter with the killer has changed my whole life. I will never choose to live a life like that again.” This is added as a kind of moral posturing, and bluntly conveys the message that the old is suddenly wiped out by the new. This self-deceiving trick has become a general practice in Hong Kong cinema no matter how mechanical and illogical it is in the plotline. *Rebellion* (*Tong Men*, dir. Herman Yau Lai-To, 2009), set in the “inter-titled” 1996, is full of cutting-edge cell phones and the characters even comment on the Iraq War, which broke out seven years later. If the film were distributed in the American market, it probably would be criticised for its rejection of the cause-effect relation between the 9/11 Attack and the Iraq War.

In fact, since the 1997 reunification, the intertwined interests of Hong Kong and China

are not limited to the film industry, but in many other aspects as well. As Hong Kong scholar Chan admitted, “Hong Kong’s growing economic dependence on the Chinese market is a received wisdom” and a strong economic partnership that is mutually beneficial (Chan, 2004: 50). Post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, as Pang (2007: 424) maintained, “is a utilitarian form of nationalism, facilitated less culturally than economically, so that this nationalisation is economically driven and therefore compliant with globalisation”.

In the first years after the 1997 handover, with the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis, Hong Kong was more economically vexed than politically because of the noninterventionist approach adopted by Beijing. Since Beijing’s first task was to maintain the stability and prosperity in Hong Kong as promised in promoting the “one country, two systems” formula, its “benevolent stance” towards HKSAR was described as “rather unexpected” by alert Hong Kong scholars (Chan, 2004:36). They concluded that Beijing’s attitude in the first years after the handover as “strongly marked by both pragmatism and a keen sense of political prudence” (Ibid: 35) and it is also pragmatism that has propelled Hong Kong to welcome the Mainland on an economic ground, though still alienating or feeling alienated culturally and ideologically in the unacquainted “motherland.” The mutation of dual-versioned Hong Kong films in the Mainland markets is a result of the opportunistic “quick money mentality” in the Mainland-Hong Kong economic collaboration and a reflection of the irreconcilable political divergence in their correlation as well.

2. Two-Versions Highlights the Political Divergence: a Reflection of HK-PRC Relationship

Despite the intertwined interests and mutual financial benefits in the economic collaboration, PRC and Hong Kong still guard against each other for political reasons. While PRC is taking a defending or intimidating stance towards the “flood” of Hong Kong films, some Hong Kong filmmakers are also intentionally provocative through their social fable or political allegory genre of films. Being a special administration region of the PRC, Hong Kong is trying to grasp every opportunity to uphold its identity through its cinema, sometimes intentionally, to express its discontentment, defiance, and even to provoke the PRC censor. Due to these divergences, the proposal to establish a film rating regime in the PRC seems to be inadequate for the “two versions” model which, to some extent, serves to be a specimen for studying the Hong Kong-PRC relationship under “one country, two systems.”

2.1 Provoking Rather Than Persecuted: the “Category E” Idea in Hong Kong movies

They [“Category E” movies] start from a non-progressive standpoint, ranging from the frankly reactionary through the conciliatory to the mildly critical; they have been worked upon, and work, in such a real way that there is a noticeable gap, a dislocation, between the starting point and the finished product.

(Comilli & Narboni, 1982: 819)

“Category E” movies here have nothing to do with the film rating system which

classifies the movies into categories based on contents, and age grouping. It is a category of ideological criticism proposed in the late 1960s by Jean-Luc Z. Comilli and Jean Narboni. Among the “A-G taxonomy” of films in the article “Cinema/ Ideology/ Criticism”, Category E films are “films which seem at first sight to belong firmly within the ideology and to be completely under its sway, but which turn out to be so only in an ambiguous manner” (Comilli & Narboni, 1982: 819). Taiwanese scholar Robert Ru-Shou Chen (1994) interpreted them as “the Fifth films”, surmounting the interrelated binaries of the first four kinds, namely: A-commercial film, B- reactionary film, C- art film, D- political film. In summary, a Category E film is like a commercial film inlaid with obscure social satires or political allegories, and only the “insiders” among the audiences will receive the message and nod with a knowing smile. Chen illustrated the subversive political appeals in Category E films with an example of a classic Chinese movie *Street Angel* (*Ma Lu Tian Shi*, 1937). The movie is packaged as a mix of melodrama and comedy but underneath is criticism of the “flabbiness” of the government in the face of the Japanese invasion.

Although since as early as the 1950s, both political events and issues are simplified and even made comic in Hong Kong cinema under the dual pressure of film censorship and film market (Chan, 2007), the filmmakers have constantly and cleverly expressed themselves by stealth and the focus of their political presentation has mainly been on the complicated relationship between China and Hong Kong. In the 1980s, the stories about Vietnam are well-known metaphors for the Chinese Communist regime in commercial hits such as *Boat People* (*Tou Ben Nu Hai*, 1982), and *A Better Tomorrow 3: Love & Death in Saigon* (*Ying Xiong Ben Se III: Xi Yang Zhi Ge*, 1989); Lam Ching Ying’s Qing dynasty zombie series has also served as an allusion to the Chinese bureaucrats and many more intentional associations to the image of China are made in

the early 1990s movies, for instance the Hong Kong Bank of China Tower in the science fiction *Wicked City* (*Yao Shou Du Shi*, 1992). This “political expediency” (Bordwell & Thompson, 1988: 919) tradition in the Hong Kong cinema has been extended over the watershed year of 1997. For example, the film title *2046* (2004, dir. Wong Kar Wai) refers to the last year before Hong Kong’s fifty years special self-governance status expires. A repeatedly shown car number plate in Johnnie To’s Macao-set gangster film *Exiled* (*Fang Zhu*, 2006) is “MF-97-99”, the particular years that respectively, Hong Kong and Macao reunited with the PRC. Similarly, the pro-longed close-up to a car number plate “CH6489” in Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung’s *Men Suddenly in Black* (*Da Zhang Fu*, 2003), is a reminder of the June Fourth Incident in 1989 (a.k.a. the Tiananmen Square Massacre) which still remains a taboo on the Mainland.



Figure 3.7 Still from *Exiled* (2006), the car number plate “MF-97-99”



Figure 3.8 Still from *Men Suddenly in Black* (2003), the car number plate “CH 6489”

Other innuendoes include the name of “Mr. Hung” (literally in Chinese, Mr. Red) in *The Longest Nite* (*An Hua*, 1998), an old triad leader who comes back to control Macao after decades of absence, and in *Election* (*Hei She Hui*, 2005), where an old triad leader “Uncle Deng” (the same as the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping who forwarded the “one country, two systems” formula), which are both easily deciphered. It would be hard to judge the real intentions for all these associations but it is clear that the filmmakers are giving vent to the inextricable tangle of their feelings towards the handover, and their status of being a SAR of socialist PRC. In this case, the edited mainland version may testify the “persecution” of these “Category E” Hong Kong films as well as their “provocation” as they “throw up obstacles in the way of the ideology, causing it to swerve and go off course” (Comilli & Narboni, 1982: 819). In this respect, these Hong Kong filmmakers can be described as, in Jean-Luc Godard’s frequently cited statement, “not making political films, but rather making films politically” (Allen, 1979:184).

A quintessential example of the “Category E” idea in Hong Kong cinema is Johnnie To’s *Election* (2005, Cantonese title: *Hak se wui*, literally *Black Society*, a euphemism for Triads society). As indicated in its English title, this film utilises the masquerade of triad election to “directly mock the lack of democracy in Hong Kong” (Pang, 2007: 425). The director himself has repeatedly emphasised that this film was made with no intention of entering the Mainland market, as it reflects the changes in Hong Kong society and “it’s bound to have a hint of the political environment” (To, 2005: n.pag.). But as a post-CEPA production, it is quite understandable that a Mainland version entitled *Long Cheng Sui Yue* (literally, *Times at Dragon Town*) would still be released simultaneously on October 20, 2005. No matter that it is a result of the official censorship by the SARFT or the commercial self-censorship by the Hong Kong studios,

the obvious elimination or editing in *Long Cheng Sui Yue* has made what is concealed in *Election* more conspicuous. In a word, the alternative version unexpectedly serves to highlight the hidden messages in the “authentic” one.

As its English title *Election* indicates, this crime film has a greater ambition than a simple portrait of the triad society. The story unfolds around the blood-soaked election of a triad head (which resulted in a Category III rating in Hong Kong), and struggling for the Dragon Head Baton—the emblem of triad power. But, in fact, it can be interpreted as embodying an appeal for democracy and universal suffrage in the SAR by using the triad society “as a microcosm of Hong Kong and its particular status as a self-governing city within the Chinese state” (Teo, 2007: 179), and the reflective thinking on the changes in post-1997 Hong Kong in terms of its relation to the Mainland. Despite the different Chinese titles, there are a total of over ten major cuts or changes in the Mainland version. Besides those funny and annoying, cliché-like “uplifting changes” of all “bad guys” being arrested and old people educating the youth not to join organised crime, some of them have revealed certain aspects about the status quo of Hong Kong under “one country, two systems”. These revelations involving areas from political claims to the people’s livelihood all point to the inquiry into and negotiation of the identity of Hong Kong being a SAR of the PRC.

First of all, an eliminated line serves as a beacon to bring out the theme or the essence of the original: an anti-triad police officer says, “The Triad started electing their chairman even earlier than we elect our chief executive.” In the interview included in the DVD version of *Election*, director To states clearly that the relationship between his making the film and Hong Kong’s anti-Article 23 demonstration in 2003 “July 1 Marches” in which universal suffrage was the focus of political controversy. Johnnie To

(2005: n.pag.) said, “I feel we lost out after 1997. We should have found our targets after the 2003 demonstration,” and those targets are the universal suffrage and the autonomy of Hong Kong. Towards the end of 2003, after the July 1 marches successfully putting off the implementation of Basic Law Article 23 which legislates against acts such as treason, subversion, secession and sedition “temporarily suspended”, the focal point has shifted to the dispute over how subsequent Chief Executives get elected. Presumably, there is some consideration of the impact of universal suffrage in Hong Kong on the one party rule in Mainland China. So in 2004, the Central Government of the PRC ruled out universal suffrage in 2007, but eventually in Dec 2007 promised to allow universal suffrage in 2017, while the Hong Kong pro-democracy camp is still pushing for this to happen in 2012.

Similarly, a slight change in one not-so-important dialogue shed light on another noticeable social phenomenon under “one country two systems”: the influx of Mainland pregnant women giving birth in HKSAR to evade the one-child policy. In the movie, a triad member reminds a Mainland informant how he has helped the Mainlander’s wife to be admitted to hospital in Hong Kong for childbirth so that the baby is a Hong Kong permanent resident. However, in the Mainland version his words are revised to simply “help sending your wife to the hospital,” in order to sidestep the sensitive topic. According to a judicial interpretation of the Basic Law made by Hong Kong Supreme Court in July 2001, all children born in Hong Kong are entitled to birthright of abode (since Hong Kong is not an independent nation, there are no provisions for Hong Kong citizenship). Then the Individual Visit Scheme began in 2003 which allows travelers from Mainland China to make brief visits to the SARs on an individual basis intended to boost the local tourism but actually triggering the “Mainland mother rush”. The number of babies born in Hong Kong by mainland mothers surged from 7810 in 2001

to 19538 in 2005, an increase of about 250 per cent (Legislative Council document, 2007).

Most noteworthy is the omission of an undercover police officer in the original, while adding another one in the Mainland version. In the Mainland-ready ending, as usual, the panacea of turning one of the criminals into an undercover policeman to justify all crimes is employed, but conspicuously the scene of a Mainland police officer talking to a triad member, revealing that he was sent to Hong Kong to infiltrate the triad before 1997 and now is asking his old acquaintance to cooperate with the Mainland police, was removed. In fact, this is the most important clue leading to the sequel of the movie, *Election 2* (*Hei She Hui 2: Yi He Wei Gui*, literally *Triad: Value Peace Most*, 2006), centering on the PRC Central Government coercing the protagonist to be the puppet chairman of the triad society while he himself attempts to go “clean” as a legitimate businessman.



Figure 3.9 Still from *Election 2*, the PRC Public Security Bureau chief (standing) coercing the protagonist to be the puppet chairman of the Hong Kong triad society

The PRC Public Security Bureau chief said to their handpicked triad leader in the movie, “Your leadership will make Hong Kong a safer place,” “You and we live together

peacefully,” echoing the real statement “the triads can also be patriotic” made by Tao Si-ju, former Minister of Public Security of PRC in the early 1990s. As interpreted in *Election 2: Value Peace Most*, the way for the triads to be patriotic is to be submissive or even servile to the state central powers. This over-obvious metaphor made in the film “generates the strongest ‘political fireworks’ in the Hong Kong-China relationship since the reunification” (Teo, 2007: 182). Of course, as “the most directly political film made in Hong Kong in the post-97 era” (Ibid), *Election 2* was never officially screened in the Mainland, while *Election*, the less political or “suspicious”, but still provocative “Category E” film, was shown with considerable revisions. These revisions were claimed to be made to accommodate the Mainland market which presently lacks a film classification system since *Election* is rated as an adult only movie in Hong Kong due to the violence. However, a close examination at the film regulatory regimes in both Hong Kong and the PRC will show that a film classification system could not really help improve the two versions phenomenon.

2.2 Differences in Film Regulatory Regimes: The Film Rating System vs. Censorship

Motion picture rating systems are a general international practice for film regulation, be it the “industry self-regulation” as adopted in United States, United Kingdom, Japan and South Korea or the government-based “command-and-control regulation” in Australia, Canada, France, India, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong (So, 2006). The regulation of film contents is intended to protect children and young people from exposure to inappropriate materials, but equally (if not more) important, the rights of the adult audience as well as the filmmakers should not be ignored. However, so far in the PRC, instead of a rating system, the government executes its control on film through

a “one-size-for-all” censorship, which means any film publicly shown in mainland theatres should be appropriate for audiences ranging from eight to eighty years old. This difference in film regulatory regimes of Mainland and Hong Kong is mostly referred to as the reason for “one movie, two versions”, and a proposed solution to the problem (Martinsen, 2005). But, in fact, through close examination of some of the cases of two-versioned films, it is self-evident that the lack of a film rating system in the PRC should not bear all the blames for what definitely is not an adequate solution to the dual-version problem. It is only a pretext for the at-will censorship in the PRC and, behind the difference in film regulation are the differences in governing concepts and practices of rule by law and by the individuals in power.

The motion picture rating system in Hong Kong was established in 1988 and revised in 1995. According to the system, any movie shown publicly in Hong Kong theatres is issued a rating among the following four:

CAT I— Suitable For All Ages

CAT IIA— Not Suitable For Children

CAT IIB— Not Suitable for Young Persons and Children

CAT III— Persons Aged 18 and Above Only

It is clear that Category III forbids a larger portion of the population from watching the film than any other rating. For the sake of market share, it is a common practice for the film companies to compromise for a IIB rating through some cuts. For example, Quentin Tarantino voluntarily submitted a self-edited, less violent version of his film *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) for IIB rating. Also, director Johnnie To’s *Exiled* (2006) was first awarded a Category III rating because of one scene showing a particular triad

gesture, but its final theatrical release in Hong Kong was in a Category IIB cut version without the scene while the uncut version is available in DVD. Occasionally, a publicly released Category III movie would voluntarily provide a self-edited IIB version for public release later or even simultaneous. For instance, *Rebellion (Tong Men, 2009)*, a 100 minutes Category III film, was screened together with its 87 minutes IIB version without all the “foul” language. Since 18+ restricted Category III or NG-17 films will result in the exclusion of some audiences, for mature business mechanisms like Hollywood and Hong Kong cinema, the goal of maximising financial return has led to a tendency towards not so exclusive IIB or R rate movies, unless the films are targeting an adult audience only with excessive violence and explicit nudity and sex as their selling points.

Under China’s “one movie for all ages” regulation, CAT IIB seems to be the upper limit as minors (even children) are admitted to the theatre with or without adult company. Many of the recent high-profile Chinese domestic blockbusters by first- class Chinese directors such as Zhang Yimou’s *House of Flying Daggers (Shi Mian Mai Fu, 2004)*, *Curse of Golden Flower (Man Cheng Jin Dai Huang Jin Jia, 2006)*; Chen Kaige’s *The Promise (Wu Ji, 2005)*, and Feng Xiaogang’s *Banquet (Ye Yan, 2006)* all contain substantial sex and violence. All of them are rated as Category IIB in Hong Kong (equivalent to an R rating in U.S) to which parental guidance is required for viewers under 17 years old. But in Mainland theatres, these movies are open to everyone without any warning.

In fact, violence scenes inappropriate for minors can often be found in publicly released films in the Mainland no matter whether it is made in Hong Kong or mainland China. Back in 1988, when the British Hong Kong government first introduced the film rating

system, the first movie being issued at Cat III rating is *Men Behind the Sun* (1988. Chinese title *Hei Tai Yang 731*, literally meaning “Black Sun: 731”), which graphically depicts the secret biological weapons experimentations conducted upon the Chinese and Soviet prisoners by the Unit 731 of the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. Despite the cruel and bloody scenes that shocked the Hong Kong censors, this movie was publicly screened in the Mainland and many schools had even organised their pupils and students to watch it as part of their extra-curriculum patriotism education. Another example is a mainland produced propaganda film *The Great Decisive Wars* (*Da Jue Zhan*, 1991) trilogy, also rated Cat III in Hong Kong due to the excessively violent combat scenes. Produced by the PLA’s (People’s Liberation Army) August First Film Studio, the movie is about the three major military campaigns between the Communist Party and Kuomintang (KMT) party (the Republic of China government who retreated to Taiwan in 1949), which had led to the founding of the PRC. It was also used as history and politics educational materials in all mainland schools from elementary to tertiary institutions in the early 1990s (Wei, 2006).

It is self-evident that violence is not the real cultural minefield in PRC film regulation but being “politically correct” is more important. Neither should erotica be regarded as the real concern. The “zigzags” of *Lust, Caution* (*Se Jie*, 2007) by Taiwanese director Ang Lee in the mainland had unveiled the truth behind the pretext of a yet-to-come rating system. It is a very controversial movie, as its large number of sex scenes roused a nation-wide call to establish a film classification system in China, only to push this dream further away from being realised. Strictly speaking, *Lust, Caution* is not a Hong Kong movie, although Hong Kong is greatly involved in the story, from the shooting location to the leading actor (Tony Leung Chiu-Wai), other supporting actors, and crew members such as co-cinematographers. Moreover, since the explicit sex scenes in the

movie have created a stir, an attempted lawsuit over the cut version in the Mainland has also brought the Hong Kong-Mainland two versions for two systems phenomenon into the spotlight.

Following the successful mode of transnational cooperation in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (*Wo Hu Cang Long*, 2000), *Lust, Caution* was also coproduced by companies across the PRC, Taiwan and the U.S. However, despite the fact that it was mainly filmed in Shanghai, mainland China screened a “clean” version of only 145 minutes without any sex, nudity or violence, while the 158-minute full version was shown in Hong Kong as Category III, which means adults only (CBC News, 2007). However, according to the director Ang Lee, the sex scenes are essential to the plot structure of the movie, and he would rather have the movie being rated NC-17 in the United States than compromising to cut those scenes to fit into Class R for higher theatrical revenue. A mainland viewer unsatisfied with the cut version thus took a legal action against the SARFT and UME International Cineplex (where he went to see the movie) (Martinsen 2007). As a PhD student at the China University of Political Science and Law, Dong Yanbin sued the theatre and the SARFT over the cut version on the ground that it infringed his rights as a consumer and violated the public's interests by failing to set up a film rating system. “I felt greatly disappointed after seeing the movie,” Dong said, “Compared to Eileen Chang’s original, the incomplete structure of ‘*Lust, Caution*’ and fragmented portrayal of the female lead’s psyche makes it hard for the audience to appreciate the movie’s art” (as cited in Ransom, 2007: n.pag.). Of course the lawsuit was not filed by the authority based on the “Catch-22” reasoning that Dong failed to provide a full version of *Lust, Caution* as evidence.

More ironically, the owner of UME international Cineplex sued by the law student is

Ng See-Yuen, a senior Hong Kong film director, producer, and also the Chairman of the Federation of Hong Kong Filmmakers. Ng had played an essential role in gaining the domestic status of Hong Kong films in the Mainland, and now plays a leading role in calling for a film rating system in China (Martinsen, 2006) to help the Hong Kong filmmakers to some degree out of the heavy censorship of the SARFT.

Early in 1994, before Ng led a delegation of Hong Kong filmmakers to visit Beijing to discuss the future of Hong Kong cinema after 1997, Lu Ping, the director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council of China, had promised creative freedom by jokingly saying that Hong Kong could keep on making Category III films, even Category IV or V since according to “one country, two systems”, you [Hong Kong filmmakers] can stick to your own film censor regime” (Hong Kong Xinbao Newspaper 1994, as cited in Antu, 2004: n.pag.). However, when Hong Kong films are heading out of HKSAR to the Mainland, the lack of a rating system became a pretext for cutting and editing them at will, and an excuse for the inconsistency of the administrative censorship.

Ang Lee has openly admitted that, besides visually cleaning up the sex and violence in the film, he had to also change the dialogue in the Mainland version for political reasons (Metro, 2007). Set in WWII Hong Kong and Japanese-occupied Shanghai, *Lust, Caution* is about a group of patriotic university students plotting to assassinate a high-ranking official in the puppet government. The attractive young woman sent to seduce him ends up falling for the official and reveals the plan when it is about to launch. According to Lee (Metro, 2007: n.pag.) her life-changing instruction “go quickly” was changed into the moderate “let’s go”, to make her intentions less ambiguous because “Chinese censors were worried about the backlash from the plot line of a supposedly

patriotic activist aiding a Japanese collaborator”. Lee acknowledged that this was an artistic compromise for the mainland market. “I didn't want to become a martyr,” he said (Ibid).



Figure 3.10 Still from *Lust, Caution* (2007), the female lead played by Mainland actress Tang Wei, telling the Japanese collaborator “Go quick!” before the planned assassination

The censorship of this film did not end with the edited version. Not long after the sensation of *Lust, Caution*, the leading actress Tang Wei who had just won the Best New Performer in the Taiwan Golden Horse Awards for her role as the undercover student, was blacklisted by the SARFT without any legal procedures or explicit explanations. Her TV advertisements were withdrawn from all Mainland television stations and she was totally deprived of the right to work as an actress in China. It was reported that the “glorification of traitors and insult to patriots” (Callick, 2008: n.pag.) message in the movie was sensed by some high-ranking veteran Communist Party cadre and as a Mainland actress, Tang Wei was banned from working in her own country. The effective ban happened suddenly and immediately steered the policy agenda from the lack of a classification regime to the self-contradictory manner in which the SARFT operated within its arbitrary administrative interference without legal grounds. An officially sanctioned movie would still, then, be censored or even banned after its public

screening. In the aftermath of *Lust, Caution*, the Mainland independent film *Lost in Beijing* (Ping Guo, 2007) was banned in early 2008 after its sanctioned release in November 2007 and the producer was forbidden to work for two years. This film is about the love affair and economic disputes between a couple of poor migrants from a rural area and their Hong Kong boss doing business in Beijing. It was accused of “taking advantage of ideological differences to chase international awards, insulting the Chinese people in the process” (Martinsen, 2007: n.pag.).

From the bitter experiences of these two movies, it becomes obvious that the problem with arbitrary enforcement of the rules is more “dangerous” than ambiguous legal provisions in film regulation. The fewer rules that are clearly stipulated, the more films that are subject to unpredictable censorship. Fundamentally, the difference between the two regulating measures — the film rating system and the censorship adapted respectively in the HKSAR and PRC — lies in the fact that the rating system protects the interests of the public as well as the filmmakers, while censorship actually protects the power of the government authority in the name of sustaining a healthy and harmonious society. In light of the possibility of the subjective judgment of “insulting Chinese people” or “glorifying the traitors”, a yet-to-come film rating system seems incapable of changing much of the awkward double presentation of Hong Kong films in the Mainland. Hence, at present, the only way for the Mainland audience to enjoy the authentic full version is ironically through pirated copies, though the double-edged effect of film piracy has had great impact on both film consumption and production.

3. The Impacts of Two-version on Hong Kong Film Consumption and Production

The aforementioned Ang Lee’s film *Lust, Caution* has aroused a nationwide urge for

the establishment of a film classification regime in the PRC, but before the day arrives when Mainland audiences can watch it at local theatres as their Hong Kong counterparts do, they watch it at home with pirated copies either in the form of DVD or Internet download. In fact, since the alternative mainland versions of many Hong Kong films have diminished the appeal of cinema-going, the “illicit” copies of the original are prevalent among Mainland viewers, which can be favorably interpreted as promoting the dissemination of authenticity. However, the consumers’ choice of the pirated authentic versions outside of the theatre has a negative impact on the filmmakers whose investment return is still dependent on the box office revenue. Therefore, Hong Kong cinema is gradually showing a tendency of self-imposed censorship to avoid revisions after submission for screen permits since the alternative versions tend to lose profit to the pirated “authentic” version.

3.1 Consumption Dilemma: the Theatrical Censored Version vs. the Pirated “Authentic” Version

The rise of film “piracy” can be explained by highlighting a number of socio-economic, cultural, political and technological changes that, in combination, create both the demand for such products and the means by which it can be more readily satisfied.

Yar (2005:680)

As depicted in the Italian film *Cinema Paradiso* (1988 dir. Giuseppe Tornatore), in a small town in 1950s Italy, a priest previews all the films before their public screening at the local theatre. The priest sits with a bell on his hand while watching the movie. When

the bell rings, it means he finds something offensive and inappropriate for public screening (usually a kissing scene). The projectionist then stops the movie and cuts the footage out. Nowadays in the PRC, the SRAFT is playing a similar role as the priest—however, the Mainland audiences living in the digital age are much luckier than the Italian townsfolk of half a century ago. With the dispersion of various forms of audiovisual technologies, a film is no longer confined to the celluloid; therefore, to watch a movie does not necessarily mean going to the theatre. Constrained by the strict film regulation in both quantity and content, the mainland audiences are no doubt pathetic, but under the government’s connivance of piracy, they are able to enjoy almost any movie they want through digital dissemination. In this sense, the “pathetic” becomes the “privileged.”

Early in the 1980s, when film was still deemed a propaganda tool in the PRC, Hong Kong entertainment films were mainly introduced to the Mainland through pirated copies, from video cassettes to VCDs and DVDs. In contrast to the stagnant state-owned cinemas, the brisk business of the mushrooming video parlors had played an important role in the “remedial film education” of the Mainland audience who had been isolated from the outside world for decades from the 1950s till the reform and opening-up policy was adopted in 1978. Since the 1980s, besides the limited number of imported films, many Hong Kong films began to be introduced into the Mainland through various pirated means. In a sense, the popularity of these unauthorised Hong Kong films has made an indispensable contribution to the first step of film industry reform through, as discussed earlier, importing ten foreign films per year since 1994 to revive the moribund cinema industry. Due to the limited quota and competition with the Hollywood blockbusters, most Hong Kong movies were imported on the basis of pre-print sales rather than box office on a revenue-sharing basis. Usually there was a “time

lag” between the Mainland screening and Hong Kong release which also provided a niche for piracy profit.

Since the implementation of the CEPA in 2004, when Hong Kong films flooded into the Mainland markets as domestic products released almost simultaneously, the “time lag” is now replaced with the “content discount” (a pun borrowed from the term “cultural discount”) of some censored versions. Scholars have introduced the term “cultural discount” (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988: 500) to describe the varied reception of media products travelling across different cultures, especially the diminished appeal of foreign media products resulting from the cultural differences between the viewers and the products. However, here in the case of the theatrical consumption of Hong Kong films in the Mainland, there emerges this unusual “content discount” due to the ideological difference under two political systems, in spite of the cultural proximity of being of one nation.

As the Mainland audiences had learned their lessons from being deceived by the “discounted” theatrical version, and turned to only pirated “authentic” films one after another, the rapidly expanding Mainland film market has imposed on its audience a consumption dilemma. On the one hand, a spurt of growth in total box office revenue demonstrates the growing habit of cinema-going as a fashionable urban middle-class life style. However, on the other, those who have had their unpleasant experiences of watching a “cut version” at the theatres have developed a habit of waiting for the illicit DVD or Internet downloads of Hong Kong full versions, which results in the unaffected proliferation of film piracy. Some research on the piracy epidemic has pointed out that, “there is a close correlation between per capita GDP and piracy levels, with the highest piracy rates to be found in those countries with the lowest incomes, and vice versa”

(Choi 1999: 2, as cited in Yar, 2005: 681). This is also true in China, whose per capita GDP ranks 100 in the world. However, with an overall GDP ranking of No.2 in the world and the rapid expansion of an urban middle class as well as their increasing disposable personal income (DPI), Mainland cinema-goers are actually a potential “cash cow” for the film industry. Their choice of watching pirate copies is a choice of content over price which can even be seen as a consumer revolt against the censored alternative versions screened in the theatres. In light of this background, movie piracy in the Mainland is to a great extent the negative consequence of censorship based on the lingering conception of film as an apparatus for ideological control rather than a problem of the enforcement of copyright law. Though, in fact, alleviated by the digital dissemination of “illicit” contents, this control has become a “leaky bucket” in the digital era. The two-version scenario can serve as an exercise in the psychoanalysis of the SARFT censors on behalf of the ruling party, and the contradistinctive textual analysis exposes the drawbacks which the SARFT desperately wants to avert.

For example, as Zhang Hongsen, deputy director of the Administration’s Film Bureau under SARFT, has said in his defence of banning *Lost in Beijing*, “Our directors should consciously defend the honor of the motherland” (Martinsen, 2007: n.pag.). It is also for the sake of the “honor of the motherland” that a few minutes of monologue was cut from a costume comedy *The Lion Roars* (*He Dong Shi Hou*, 2002, dir. Joe Ma Wai-Ho). It was removed from the mainland version because it was regarded as offensive and insulting to the ruling party. The removed speech is: “I know there are places in this country where children are too poor to go to school. Even if some manage to get into school, they are studying in shabby classrooms without any desk. I am singing the song here for these poor children and wish one day they all get to eat a lot of fruits.” Then the male protagonist starts to sing the funny *Fruit Song* adapted from the famous Cancan

dance music *Orpheus in the Underworld*, with hilarious lyrics composed of a namelist of fruits. The little speech is important to characterise the male protagonist as a loving person and explains why the proud girl who has rejected so many other admirers would suddenly fall for him in spite of his poor singing. Although set in the Song dynasty (960-1279), which is over a thousand years ago, the short speech was still regarded as referring to present mainland China and was removed from the Mainland release. Other examples, such as the aforementioned *Running on Karma* and *Naked Ambition*, whose heavily-cut Mainland versions have baffled and disappointed the Mainland audiences, and eventually driven them to the pirated “authentic” versions.

In the article “The Global ‘Epidemic’ of Movie ‘Piracy’: Crime-wave or Social Construction?”, Yar (2005: 678) maintains that piracy can be regarded “as a social construction whose increase can be attributed to shifting legal, political and criminal justice contexts which serve to ‘produce’ the problem of ‘piracy’ in its current scope and scale”. This argument is based on defining piracy as “the unauthorized copying and distribution (often, though not necessarily, for commercial gain) of copyrighted content” based on the intellectual property law (Ibid). However, in the case of the PRC, without any intention to justify or legitimatise piracy, we must admit that, as ideological censorship is intensely involved in film production and exhibition, the definition of piracy is problematised as sometimes the officially authorised versions are actually “frauds” of the original. Hence, the role of piracy as “social construction” becomes more striking as a means against the authoritarian censorship.

On the positive side, the contradistinction of the two versions simultaneously screened publicly and circulated underground has materialised and visualised this control as self-deceiving hypocrisy on the level of film consumption. However, it is also bothering

Hong Kong filmmakers as the piracy caused by the two versions phenomenon is not only jeopardising the box-office revenue but also challenging some filmmakers' conscience in safeguarding their artistic integrity. *Shinjuku Incident* (*Xin Su Shi Jian*, 2009), starring Jackie Chan and directed by veteran Hong Kong director and producer Derek Yee Tung-Shing, was withdrawn from the tempting mainland market without even submitting the film for approval. Although initially registered as a Hong Kong-Mainland coproduction, and enlisted in the repertoire of the China Film Group Corporation official website, this movie ended up reaching the Mainland audiences only through pirated copies.



Figure 3.11 Movie Poster of *Shinjuku Incident* (2009, starring Jackie Chan)

Derek Yee explained his decision of not releasing the movie in mainland China on the ground that China does not have a movie rating system while toning down or cutting the violence would hurt the integrity of the movie (as cited in M. Lee, 2009). However, contrary to his explanation, a cut version about 19 minutes shorter was released in Singapore and Malaysia, two places well-known as conservative in their film censorship policies. In addressing the issue, Mainland film critics pointed out that, apart from the concerns of the violence and film rating, the real obstruction for *Shinjuku Incident* to enter the Mainland is the sensitive topic of illegal Chinese immigrants in

Japan, and the strident theme of “Chinese don’t fight Chinese” spoken out openly in the movie, both “inviting suspicion of insulting the Chinese people” (Ma, 2009). Quite different from Jackie Chan’s usual trademark action movie, *Shinjuku Incident* is closer to a drama. It realistically portrays the ignominious struggling life of illegal Chinese immigrants in Japan. The direct exposure of the deep-rooted bad characters of the Chinese people and cruel reality of the conflicts and discrimination among the Japanese, the established Chinese immigrants, and the illegal, indigent newcomers, may all easily antagonise the Mainland censors. From previous experience, “Censors have in the past taken offence at such scenes as the killing of Chinese soldiers by Tom Cruise in last year’s *Mission Impossible III* and the portrayal of a Chinese pirate by Hong Kong star Chow Yun-Fat in the opening minutes of *Pirates of the Caribbean III*” (Dikie, 2007: n.pag.).

In fact, the successes of Derek Yee’s other two films in the mainland, *One Nite in Mongkok* (*Wang Jiao Hei Ye*, 2004) as import, and *Protégé* (*Men Tu*, 2007) as co-production, have made Derek Yee an admirable mainland expert and censorship consultant among Hong Kong filmmakers. His decision of giving up the Mainland market for *Shinjuku Incident* is no doubt a difficult one after thorough consideration and careful commercial planning. Not all Hong Kong films are led by a marquee idol like Jackie Chan and a Japanese partner to secure the overseas markets outside mainland China. Moreover, as Yee was quite clear that the mainland audience would eventually get to watch this movie outside the theatres, he made an advertisement for another movie he produced by calling “those who don’t get to watch *Shinjuku Incident* in the first time, go to watch *Overheard*” (*Qie Ting Feng Yun*, BeijingSina.com, 2009) which had in fact become a hit since it was promoted as “not even one cut” after the scrutiny of SARFT.

3.2 Disappearing “Two-versions”: an Indication of Self-censorship of Hong Kong Cinema

No matter how “socially constructive” those pirated original versions seem to be to the Mainland film consumption environment, the implications of digital dissemination for Hong Kong filmmakers are double-edged. On the one hand, its contribution in clearing up the misunderstanding and doubts of Hong Kong cinema caused by its mainland mutations should not be neglected; on the other, these original versions wantonly circulated outside the theatre is greatly jeopardising the box-office revenue, which is at cross purposes for Hong Kong films to enter the mainland as “national products”. Since the audiences had lost faith and trust in the theatrical versions, the Hong Kong filmmakers had to find new ways to entice the mainland audience back into the theatres.

Since 2008, more and more Hong Kong filmmakers began to claim their movies as remaining intact after the examination and approval of the SARFT. Starting from *Sparrow* (*Wen Que*, dir. Johnnie To, 2008), *Overheard* (*Qie Ting Feng Yun*, 2009), to *Police Tactic Unit II: Comrades In Arms* (*PTU II: Tong Pao*, 2009), “not even one cut” has become a selling point or a promotion strategy of Hong Kong cinema in the Mainland market. However, contrary to the advertising message “not even one cut”, there is more than just one cut and edit in all of them. The Mainland version of *Sparrow* is also 14 minutes shorter than its Hong Kong “old and big” brother released two months earlier in June 2008, and *PTU2*’s Mainland version is 16 minutes shorter than the Hong Kong one released three months earlier in January 2009. Just as the audiences have realised that a couple of months’ time-lag had caused quite some shrinkage in the film length, the distributor of *Overheard* cannily changed their tactics. In case f the Mainland audiences found out the difference on the first day of release, *Overheard* was

unusually screened in the Mainland one week earlier than in Hong Kong, and this time the Mainland version is longer, as it has added a plot about the self-reproaching character voluntarily cooperating with the Hong Kong ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) to “uplift” the story a little, but only to “cripple” the plotline and the original theme of the movie.

Strictly speaking, “not even one cut” is not a lie to fool the audience, but only an intentionally vague statement. To be exact, it is in fact “not even one cut” by the SARFT but “more than one cut” by Hong Kong producers themselves. As the films have been self-censored and edited before submission, they are almost impeccably tailored to please the censors. This “improved” tactic was adopted to speed up the examination process and to ensure the scheduled releasing time slot. As mentioned earlier, the censorship of SARFT is rather more contingent and arbitrary than strictly following a detailed stipulation. In a symposium on Hong Kong cinema held in early 2010, Hong Kong filmmaker Lawrence Cheng Tan Shui revealed his frustrating experience of seeking approval from the Mainland censors years ago. Originally, he was making a film about a married couple and the husband’s secret lover. However, the story was rejected by the Mainland officials for the reason that the extra-marital affair was against the socialist morality. Then he changed the scenario to a love triangle involving an unmarried couple who live together, but was rejected again on the ground that co-habitation before marriage was illegal in the socialist society (Hong Kong – Asia Film Financing Forum website, 2010). However, in fact, occasionally the subjects of both extra-marriage affairs and pre-marriage co-habitation do appear on the Mainland screens. These films had turned out to be quite popular, such as *A Sigh* (*Yi Sheng Tan Xi*, 2000) and *Cell Phone* (*Shou Ji*, 2004) by Mainland director Feng Xiao Gang. But compared to Mainland directors, Hong Kong filmmakers are not good at

guessing where the bottom-line is for PRC censors and thus appear to be more timid in choosing their film subjects.

Repeated negotiations and reworking to satisfy the censors in Beijing had caused great trouble and time to the studios in Hong Kong but cannot even guarantee a screening permit. In 2004, the beginning year of the CEPA, out of 64 Hong Kong films which had passed the pre-shooting script appraisal that were submitted to the SARFT for another round of examination before screening. 63 titles passed the SARFT to obtain a screening permit in the Mainland. The only one failed after a couple of revisions and resubmissions is a gangster film, *Blood Brothers (Jianghu)*, produced by Eric Tsang Chi-wai. Tsang, as well as the audience had had great expectations for this film but only found it “outlawed” in the Mainland due to its “dark, choreographed violence and politically ambiguous ending” (Davis & Yeh, 2008: 105). *Rebellion (Tong Men, 2009)* by Herman Yau Lai-To had been scheduled for release in October 2008 but was put back for one year in order to revise for a Mainland permit. Having learned their lessons from these arduous and unpleasant encounters with SARFT, the Hong Kong producers began to self-censor the movie to make “necessary” revisions based on others pitfalls before sending it to the SARFT.

In order to increase the safety factor in the examination process, the self-censorship usually tends to be even tougher than necessary. Since the revisions made are based on one-sided conjectures and speculations on the PRC mainstream ideology by Hong Kong studios, they are marked strongly with extreme caution and cultural anxiety of watchful newcomers. For example in *PTU II: Comrades in Arms (PTU II: Tong Pao, 2009)*, the anthem from the Cathedral miraculously becomes “Happy Birthday to You” in the Mainland version. This improbable change seems to have learned its lesson from the

aforementioned *Running on Karma* and attempt to avoid the sensitivity of religious matters. But this act is actually overcautious about the religious policy of the PRC. In fact, the anthem “Lord don’t move that mountain” in the mainland-imported Hollywood movie *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), starring Will Smith, has inspired many Mainland viewers, and O. Henry’s 1904 short story *The Cop and the Anthem* has been included in the Mainland high school textbook for decades.

However, since no one can be 100 per cent sure about what the SARFT would allow or prohibit, it has been judged to be better to play it safe by going farther than necessary. In their attempt to be “integrated with a larger China constituency” (Davis & Yeh, 2008: 47), the self-imposed censorship of Hong Kong cinema hence perfectly illustrated the “Not ‘Chineseness’ but learned helplessness” put forward in Chan’s article “Taking Stock of ‘One Country, Two Systems’” (2004: 52). As Chan (Ibid: 55) notes:

Overall, Hong Kong people have come to realise that the Basic Law, which embodies the “one country, two systems” principle, has nonetheless ensured HKSAR's ultimate subordination to the will of the Central People’s Government. There is no question that Beijing will always have the upper hand when it comes to contacts with Hong Kong.

This subordination, as aforementioned, is more economic than political, as Chan (2004: 35-36) also admits that in the first years after the handover, marked by “both pragmatism and a keen sense of political prudence” an unexpected “noninterventionist approach” was adopted. It is clearly illustrated by the heavy dependence of Hong Kong cinema on the Mainland market and their desperate “make-up” tactic in entering the ideologically estranged “domestic” Mainland market.

With the “not even one cut” slogan debunked, the once-effective measure of dual-versioned movies for passing the examination of the SARFT seems no longer profitable, and will even damage the market potential for Hong Kong cinema, since after all those precedents the audience has learned to wait for the pirated “genuine version” instead of “rushing” into the theatres. Therefore, the “two versions” model gradually retreats from the Mainland screens, and Hong Kong films have to choose between either totally abandoning the Mainland market (like *Shinjuku Incident* or other low budget productions aiming only at the Hong Kong local market), or making movies more consciously catering to the PRC official ideology by staying away from sensitive boundaries in its topic, theme and details. Undoubtedly, most would choose the latter for business considerations. Therefore, the pressure of piracy has resulted in the recent tendency of self-censoring by Hong Kong filmmakers, such as Raymond Wong Bak-Ming, a member of the Mainland Market Committee of Hong Kong Film Development Council, who advocated in early 2009 that the Hong Kong filmmakers should learn to make their choices, to respect the game rules (in the Mainland), and not to be obstinate (Chinanews.com, 2009).

Mr. Wong is the founder of the Cinema City Studio which had produced Hong Kong benchmark action films like *A Better Tomorrow* (*Ying Xiong Ben Se*, dir. John Woo, 1986), *City on Fire* (*Jian Yu Feng Yun*, dir. Ringo Lam, 1987) and a successful series of ghost films and urban comedies throughout the “golden period” of Hong Kong cinema in the 1980s to early 1990s. Now Wong’s emphasis on the importance of accommodating the Mainland business environment can be interpreted as a manifestation of Hong Kong cinema accelerating its integration with the Mainland cinema in the post-CEPA era. After four or five years striving against the SARFT and struggling under the censorship, the two-version phenomenon which used to prosper

around the 2004 CEPA implementation is now gradually fading away, replaced by the more adept co-productions of Chinese-language films handling their subjects and themes with ease to sell across the border, but never touch the out-of-bounds areas. The economisation of time and effort in film production and maximisation of profit is made at the cost of the vernacular culture and identity of Hong Kong, which manifests the transition of the Hong Kong cinema in Mainland China to the Hong Kong cinema of China. The gradual integration of Hong Kong cinema into the PRC cinema is actually sped up by the vanishing two-version phenomenon in the fifty-year promise of “one country, two systems” after the 1997 reunification as a transitional period towards final, “grand” unification.

Conclusion:

Multi-version films are not a new phenomenon taking place in postcolonial Hong Kong cinema, but are scaled up and foregrounded under the unprecedented “one country, two systems” policy adopted in HKSAR since 1997. On the one hand, “one movie, two versions” is a desperate remedy or a case of “cultural expediency” in the industrial downturn of Hong Kong cinema, reflecting the economic collaboration and ideological divergence between free capitalist HKSAR and the socialist PRC, which has begun to adopt a market economy. On the other hand, the contra-comparison of the two versions provides us with a vivid portrait of the situation of “one country, two systems” as well as the intertwined interests and competing powers under it. Since digital technology has changed the movie-viewing ecology, the PRC censorship has thus become powerless in the face of pirate copies, and resulted in financial losses to the box office revenue as the audience has turned away from the theatrical censored versions to the pirated authentic ones. The first two or three years after CEPA’s implementation in 2004 can be seen as

the running-in time of the economic cooperation between the Hong Kong film industry and the Mainland authorities, when an alternative version was often specially made for the Mainland. However, the illegal digital dissemination of the pirated original versions of Hong Kong films has greatly undermined the profit of the theatrically released Mainland alternative versions. The Hong Kong filmmakers, who have become more familiar with the taboos and tastes of the Beijing censors, are becoming more reluctant to make two versions for two markets. Therefore, since around 2008, Hong Kong filmmakers have produced fewer dual-versioned movies for the “two systems” but more self-censored non-offensive movies made for “one country”. Along with the gradual demise of the distinct “two-version” phenomenon, Hong Kong cinema has begun to show a tendency of integrating into the Mainland Chinese cinema through film co-productions. The flourishing Hong Kong-Mainland film co-production has not only changed the configuration of the Hong Kong film industry but also reflected the dynamic relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, the two regions/systems. In the following chapter, I will probe the co-production trend by examining the changing roles of the Mainland actresses in these co-produced films, and seek to demonstrate the changing balance between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Chapter Five

“Not Made for the PRC”:

Efforts to Keep Hong Kong Cinema Unchanged

Hong Kong Basic Law, the SAR’s mini-Constitution, stipulates that “the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years” after the sovereignty transfer (the Basic Law, Article 5). However, with intensive cross-border economic cooperation, post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has become an outstanding case of “change” by taking the Mainland as its primary target market. Under the “one country, two systems” model, Hong Kong films are still deemed as foreign cultural products and can only be imported to mainland China. Only the films co-produced with the Mainland can be distributed and exhibited as domestic products, according to the CEPA signed in 2003. Thus, Hong Kong cinema has seen an upsurge in Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced films to tap into the new and burgeoning market. During the first six years that the CEPA took effect (2004 to 2009), nearly 60 per cent of Hong Kong films were co-productions with the Mainland, which is a total of 206 films out of 348 (Hong Kong Year Book, 2004-2009; Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department). In this sense, Hong Kong cinema in the post-CEPA era is split into two sectors operating under “two systems” — the co-productions made for the PRC and the “not made for the PRC” films.

Compared to the co-produced Hong Kong films which are required to comprise at least one-third of the cast from Mainland China, and are subject to the film regulations in the PRC, the non-co-produced films seem to represent a more authentic and intact Hong Kong cinema. As basically all pre-1997 Hong Kong films were not made for the Mainland due to its underdeveloped market condition, in the post-CEPA Mainland-bound era the residual “not made for the Mainland” sector may seem more like the legitimate heir of the pre-changeover Hong Kong cinema. Unlike the “diluted” co-productions, these “pure Hong Kong films” aim to consolidate the difference between the “two systems” and to prevent local identity from extinction because of economic integration, if not politically compromised reunification. Therefore, making “not-for-the-Mainland” films becomes a supposed survival mechanism to keep Hong Kong cinema unchanged within the overwhelming “nationalisation” trend.

This desire and expectation is illustrated by the symposium “Hong Kong Cinema: Beyond Co-production”, organised by Hong Kong International Film Festival Society (HKIFFS) and Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF) in March 2010. This symposium was explicitly dedicated to exploring “alternatives other than Hong Kong cinema collaborating with Chinese cinema” (HAF web site, 2010). This statement is, on the one hand, a tacit acknowledgment that the future of Hong Kong cinema is inextricably linked to mainland China; while on the other, it is a call for urgent attention to the diminishing, so called “pure Hong Kong films.” As the co-production mode prevails in the Hong Kong film industry, the “not made for the Mainland” film is, to some extent, becoming an endangered species. Government statistics show that the number of non-co-productions hit a new low of only 9 films in the year of 2009 (Hong Kong Year Book, 2009).

This chapter will focus on the “not made for the Mainland” films of the post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, including the post-CEPA non-co-productions, even some of the pre-CEPA Hong Kong-led co-productions. As I have explained in previous chapters, generally these nominal co-productions are essentially Hong Kong films shot in Mainland locations, rather than aiming at the Mainland market. I will concentrate on the keyword “change” to, first, explore the economic and cultural forces that have caused the “two sectors split” phenomenon in Hong Kong cinema; and, second, to unravel the changing attitudes toward the post-1997 change(s) reflected in film aesthetics and narrative. Furthermore, I will examine the more recent situation of the “not made for the PRC” films with regard to their financing schemes, marketing strategies and effect in denoting Hong Kong cultural specificity and regional distinctions. The chapter ultimately seeks to discuss the validity of keeping “Hong Kong cinema” unchanged under the “one country, two systems” model through making films that are not destined for the Mainland market.

Is the Transnational Hong Kong Cinema Becoming “Half PRC, Half Local”?

Transnationalism, rather than nationalism or localism, has long been seen as the key feature of the pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema. As Pang (2010: 140) notes, “Hong Kong cinema had always been transnational..... the “national” is not applicable to this cinema in any direct sense.” Her view echoes Teo (2000: n.pag.) that the term “national cinema” is “a misnomer when applied to Hong Kong” and “too glib to call Hong Kong cinema a ‘national cinema,’” while Lu (1997: 15) also suggests that “To see Hong Kong cinema as local cinema is misleading.”

When talking about Hong Kong cinema in its heyday of the mid-1980 to early 1990s,

Hong Kong has often been referred to as the “Hollywood of the East” by film scholars (Dannen & Long, 1997; Hammond, 2000; Chung, 2004; Ciecko, 2006:171). Even today the Hong Kong Tourism Board highlights this reputation to market and promote Hong Kong as a travel destination (HKTB website), although the number of Hong Kong film productions has plummeted from 242 films in 1993 to 51 in 2009 (Zhang, 2004: 261; Hong Kong Year Book, 2009). However, this label of the “Hollywood of the East” does indicate the transnational character and appeal of the export-oriented Hong Kong film industry similar to that of Hollywood. The great director John Ford once said, “Hollywood is a place you can’t geographically define” (as cited in Miller et al, 2001: 1). In her article “Transnational imagination in action cinema: Hong Kong and the making of a global popular culture” Meaghan Morris (2004: 184) also contended that:

By “Hong Kong”, I mean a location in which filmmakers from many places— notably Japan, the Philippines, Australia, the US, Taiwan and the Chinese mainland— have interacted with the local industry to produce a new transnational genre.....[Hong Kong cinema] has long addressed local concerns in cosmopolitan cultural forms.

In this sense, Hong Kong cinema cannot be categorised simply as a geographic-specific national or local cinema in terms of its provenance, like Japanese cinema, or Taiwanese cinema. “Hong Kong presents a theoretical conundrum”, as Fu and Desser (2000: 5) point out in the introduction to their edited book *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, because it is (or was) “a Chinese community under British rule, a cinema without a nation, a local cinema with transnational appeal.”

With regard to transnational appeal, Toby Miller et al. substantiate their book title

Global Hollywood by pointing out at the very beginning of the book that “Hollywood owns between 40 per cent and 90 per cent of the movies shown in most parts of the world” (Miller, et al., 2001:3). In fact, in its “golden decade” till 1993, Hong Kong cinema had also thrived in its overseas markets across Asian countries and in other Chinese communities all over the world (except for the PRC). In the Afterword to the Chinese translation of *Global Hollywood*, the Taiwanese scholar Chien-san Feng (2003b) has discussed the domination of Hong Kong cinema in the Taiwan market from the early 1980s to early 1990s. During the most prosperous time of Hong Kong cinema, the overseas markets usually made up 30 to 80 per cent of the total income of each Hong Kong film (Lo, 2005: 114) among which the Taiwan market alone could contribute about 25-35 per cent and the other 30-40 per cent was from the four South-East Asian countries, namely Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand (Leung and Chan, 1997: 142). In the 1980s, usually 8 out of the ten top-grossing movies in Taiwan market have been Hong Kong films, and in 1992 both in Taiwan and Singapore, the top ten all went to Hong Kong titles (Lii, 1996: 142). Even in non-Chinese speaking communities like Thailand and Pakistan, the market share of Hong Kong films had reached more than 50 per cent of the total admissions in its peak time in early 1990s. This Hollywood-like transnational appeal or invasion of the pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema has led Taiwanese scholar Ding-Tzan Lii, in his discussion of the expansion of Hong Kong films in Asian countries, to call Hong Kong “a “marginal empire” (Lii, 1996: 141) or “colonised empire” (Lii, 1998:122).

However, the year 1993 marked the end of Hong Kong cinema as a “cottage industry” (Bordwell, 2000: 80) in comparison to the “real” movie empire— Hollywood. That year, Steven Spielberg’s big-budget science fiction thriller *Jurassic Park* (1993) became the first foreign movie topping the Hong Kong domestic box-office and marked the

beginning of the industry downturn (Morris, 2004). Besides the competition from Hollywood blockbusters, the recession was also caused by a series of complicated and interrelated factors. Apart from local triad involvement and video piracy (Lie, 2007), the major problem is identified as hyperproduction at the cost of film quality (Curtin, 2007: 68) or, as Stokes and Hoover (1999: 297) put it, “overproduction” characterised by Karl Marx’s “production without regard to the limits of the market.” As the slump in both export revenue and local movie attendance led to the downsizing of the film industry, in October 1995 an influential Hong Kong magazine *Ming Pao Monthly* boldly declared “The Death of Hong Kong Cinema” in its cover story (Lie, 2007).

Although this sensational assertion was only a kind of journalistic gimmick to draw public attention to the deteriorating conditions of Hong Kong cinema (such as shrinking market share and talent drain), it turned out to be a prophetic warning of the downfall of Hong Kong domestic market. In the year 1996, for the first time in decades, the box-office revenue of imported films in the Hong Kong domestic market had exceeded that of the local products. The market share of Hong Kong films in its home market dropped from 78 per cent in 1992 to 47 per cent in 1996 (Zhang, 2004: 261). Compared to the peak of 1992, when all top ten grossing films in the local market were from Hong Kong, five were Hollywood blockbusters in 1996 (Bordwell, 2000: 75-80). In sharp contrast to the downfall of Hong Kong cinema, the so-called “Hollywood in the East”, is Hollywood’s discovery of the Asian market by 1996, with the region accounting for 30 per cent of the entire international movie business (Stokes & Hoover, 1999: 297). This dramatic turn provides strong support for the assertion that “the Hollywood of the East is still Hollywood,” and that any world cinema can only be the “other” of Hollywood rather than being truly global (Bordwell, 2000: 82).

As the Asian Financial Crisis beginning in 1997 further diminished the traditional overseas markets and finance sources for Hong Kong cinema (Stokes & Hoover, 1999: 292; Pang, 2002a; Zhang, 2004: 262), it started to undergo an economic restructuring that reduced its dependence on the investment and distribution in the former overseas markets. Apart from its own relatively small local film market with a population of about 600 million, the only promising overseas market untapped by Hollywood is the yet-to-be-claimed Mainland Chinese market protected by a strict import quota of 10 films per year (20 since 2003 as promised in WTO accession).

So, parallel to the 1997 political regime change of Hong Kong, its cinema is also undergoing a shift from the de-territorialised, transnational to the uncanny paradigm of being “half Chinese national, half Hong Kong local.” This shift is also characterised by the increasing involvement and intervention of both the PRC Central and the Hong Kong SAR governments. The preferential policy of the CEPA granted by the PRC Central government started in 2004, and the direct subsidy from the Hong Kong Film Development Fund established by the Hong Kong SAR government initiated in 2007. These are both telling examples of the move from the British colonial *laissez-faire* policy to government intervention.

From the above outlined pre-1997 cultural and economic conditions of Hong Kong cinema, it is evident that the change was not in a sudden rupture but emerged gradually almost a decade before the co-production trend in 2004. In this sense, the “not-made-for-the-Mainland” localisation mode is a result of, first, the overall recession and possible demise under the globalisation of Hollywood, and then the nationalisation of the Mainland co-productions. Clearly by no means can the localisation strategy restore the pre-1997 transnational appeal of Hong Kong cinema, but it does function to

preserve some of the characteristics of Hong Kong as a “special city” of the PRC. It can be regarded as a response to the local conditions of being “under double hegemony of the national and the global” (V. Lee, 2009: 2). In the following three parts of this chapter, I will examine Hong Kong cinema’s post-1997, pre-CEPA competition with Hollywood, and then trace the subtle changes in the attitudes and strategies of Hong Kong cinema towards its own paradigm shift caused by the major change in its target market. Through these “not-made-for-the-Mainland” films, I will then analyse their efforts in undertaking a quest for a unique Hong Kong identity in this changing context.

1. Becoming Global: More Problems Than It Solved

Before 2004 when the Mainland market became available to and lucrative for Hong Kong cinema, the Hong Kong film industry had adopted an internationalisation strategy in order to compete with Hollywood for overseas markets so as to “go global.” In his paper “Local and Global Identity: Whither Hong Kong Cinema”, Teo (2000: n.pag.) notes that “Hong Kong cinema has long geared itself to servicing the overseas Chinese community — the Chinese diaspora.....as the market for Hong Kong pictures has shrunk in the region, it has become increasingly apparent that Hong Kong cinema is pursuing more than just the overseas Chinese audience.” What Teo refers to here is a “self-Hollywoodisation” trend of Hong Kong cinema, “to expand into the international market, to find a market beyond the traditional Chinese-speaking market” (Teo, 2000: n.pag.) in the aftermath of losing it to Hollywood since the mid-1990s. This urge is reflected in the high-tech and high-concept turn in the production of the erstwhile “cottage industry.” However, this “going global” strategy had actually failed in leading “a construction of a global identity” as expected (Teo, 2000: n.pag.). Rather it has further pushed Hong Kong cinema to the soon-to-be-claimed Mainland market as its

indispensable hinterland, and led to the later “two sectors split.”

1.1 Emulating and Embracing Hollywood to Survive it

“To paraphrase Marx and Engels, a specter haunts Hong Kong cinema – the specter of Hollywood.”

(Stokes & Hoover, 1999: 301)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Hong Kong local film market has been under the inexorable pressure of Hollywood since it was first conquered by *Jurassic Park* in 1993. Five of the top ten grossing films in 1996 were Hollywood high concept blockbusters, led by *Independence Day* and *Mission Impossible* (1996). The number of imported films immediately hit a historic high to 69 per cent in the following year, and the sequel of the 1993 winner *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, “far exceeded perennial winner Jackie Chan’s entry *Mr Nice Guy* (*Yi Ge Hao Ren*, 1997) to finish number one” (Stokes & Hoover, 1999: 293). The changing taste of the movie audience has demonstrated a new preference for more dazzling and mind-blowing special effects over the traditional bare-handed fight. Thus, Hong Kong cinema started to take a high-tech turn towards the artificial computer-generated imagery (CGI), rather than remain committed to the “authentic” body training of the stunt.

In 1998, the first Hong Kong CGI spectacular, *The Storm Riders* (*Feng Yun Xiong Ba Tian Xia*), a mythical fantasy based on a popular Hong Kong comic book about two ancient Chinese warriors, took back the position of local box-office winner from Hollywood. Although Jackie Chan sourly complained that the special effects of this innovative film for Hong Kong cinema belonged to “the kindergarten level” (Li, 2005:

60), it did regain some confidence by reviving Hong Kong cinema through state-of-art digital effects. *The Storm Raider* was immediately followed by *A Man Called Hero* (*Zhong Hua Ying Xiong*) in 1999, another expansive CGI film based on the local comic series *Chinese Hero*. This time the ambition of internationalisation was more obvious. Most of the plot is set in 1910s New York Chinatown, and at the climax of the movie, the Chinese heroes perform a spectacular duel at the top of the Statue of Liberty (with the help of digital technology). These two films are both co-produced by Hong Kong Centro Digital Pictures Limited, which later provided visual effects for Quentin Tarantino’s heavily Hong Kong-influenced sequential *Kill Bill* movies (2003, 2004). As the head of Centro Digital Pictures Frankie Chung notes, “We wanted to make a movie that adheres to the original Hong Kong style, which is kung fu, but also appeals to our audiences, whose taste for effects has matured through exposure to effects-laden Hollywood films, video games, and commercials” (as cited in Khoo 2009: 253).



Figure 5.1-2 Stills from *A Man Called Hero* (1998)

Duel atop of the Statue of Liberty

By digitizing the wire-enhanced choreography widely applied in Hong Kong action films, Centro Digital Pictures had pushed the Hong Kong film industry to a higher standard (Stokes & Hoover, 1999: 299). Ironically, for the groundbreaking *The Storm Raiders* and *A Man Called Hero*, the company had won two Best Visual Effect prizes in the Taiwan Golden Horse Film Awards, but only Best Sound Design at the Hong Kong Film Awards, as there was no such thing as Best Visual Effect at HKFA until 2002. The first winner of this new award at HKFA is, not surprisingly, Centro Digital Pictures, for its third instalment *Shaolin Soccer* (*Shaolin Zu Qiu*, 2001), also garnering another five prizes, including best picture and director. By bringing *Shaolin* (a Buddhist temple known as China's martial arts mecca) *kung fu* to the superman-styled soccer player starring by local megastar Stephen Chow Shin-chi, this movie set a new box-office record in Hong Kong until Chow's next co-operation with Centro, *Kung Fu Hustle* (*Gong Fu*, 2004).

As *Shaolin Soccer* was shot and screened at a very depressed time when Hong Kong was yet to recover from the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, Davis and Yeh (2008 : 40) note that the film's success lies in its underdog motif and the recovery of "Hong Kong can-do spirit." They (Ibid: 38-43) categorise this film as what they call "the new localism" as an alternative to the Chinese-language blockbuster benchmark such as the "hybrid, global" *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (*Wo Hu Cang Long*, 2000), which involves finance and skilled personnel from Taiwan, Hong Kong, mainland China and the US. However, I would disagree on what they highlight in *Shaolin Soccer* as "loyalty to the local." Davis and Yeh (2008: 41) contend that "[t]he picture is locally owned and made, produced by Chow's Star East and Universe, an independent local video distributor. Without the need of outside assistance, it took local cinema to a new level of fineness." However, *Shaolin Soccer* is a transitional product or even a trigger in Hong

Kong cinema's shift to "half PRC, half local" film industry, with a Hollywood-inspired CGI vehicle.

Shaolin Soccer started as a co-production shot in the Mainland with a Mainland female lead Vicky Zhao (also in *My Dream Girl* discussed in chapter 2), and the story is set not specifically in Hong Kong, but in "a generic Chinese city embracing both Hong Kong and Shanghai", as Davis and Yeh (2008: 41) also acknowledged. However, the film has never got a theatrical release in the Mainland. This is because of a dispute with the Film Bureau under SARFT over the use of *Shaolin* in the movie title. The SARFT absurdly regarded it as a kind of transgression against the Shaolin Temple to put *Shaolin* together with soccer and insisted on changing the title to "*Kung Fu Soccer*" (Yang, 2001; Robinson, 2006 as cited in Klein 2007: 193). The loss on the Mainland market revenue was not too serious for the production company, as in 2001 the market was yet to be a booming one. However, the more severe penalty was that the production company was banned from shooting on the Mainland for one year, as this would increase the costs of the company's future production.

Since the use of CGI has greatly increased production costs, the advantages of "cooperating" with the Mainland for the cheaper labor and premises have become more prominent. Moreover, due to the lack of funding, the technology of the Hong Kong film industry is in fact "at kindergarten level" (in Jackie Chan's words) compared to that of Hollywood. The high-tech production sometimes still needs to rely on some primitive methods requiring a large amount of labour. For example, in the Roman Colosseum sequences of the Hollywood production *Gladiator* (2000), the large crowd of spectators is actually 33,000 virtual images based on 2000 live actors (Winkler, 2000: 102). However, in *Shaolin Soccer*, the most important soccer match scene was shot at the

City Stadium of Zhuhai (a mainland city adjacent to Macau) by inviting thousands of local fans to sit in the stadium every day for almost a month, which then requires much less work on the postproduction of creating the CG crowd. This is probably a method only viable on the Chinese mainland.



Figure 5.3 Still from *Shaolin Soccer* (2001)

In this sense, the increased production budget in an effort to emulate Hollywood has further pushed Hong Kong to the path of collaborating with the Mainland, not only to reduce the costs, but also for a greater market return. Five months after the “Shaolin” incident, on December 11, 2001, China officially became a member of the WTO. In facing the pressure of relaxing controls on imported cultural products, a week later the government issued a document “About the Implementation of Reform on Distribution and Exhibition Systems” to require the entire country to set up theater chains (Chu, 2010: 95), thus commencing the top-down commercialisation of Chinese film industry.

The growing Mainland market is important to Hong Kong cinema not only because it is lucrative but, more importantly, because it is a market protected by the 20 import film annual quota. Once Hong Kong films were treated as domestic products in this market, they would face much less competition from Hollywood than even in their *own* domestic film market — Asia’s international city Hong Kong. Hence, Hong Kong

cinema is facing two options: one is to make small-to-medium budget, more locally specific films to compete with Hollywood blockbusters in the small Hong Kong market, but to save the trouble of coming to terms with the Mainland censor. The other is to make big-budget (by Hong Kong, not Hollywood standards) co-productions based on the quota-protected the Mainland market.

Another important factor, which also contributed to Hong Kong cinema's retreat to the Mainland market, is Hollywood's incorporation of Hong Kong cinema in terms of skilled personnel and aesthetic traditions. Both *The Matrix* (1999) and *Kill Bill* (2003) were action films choreographed by Hong Kong film veteran Yuen Wo Ping. The two movies have both demonstrated Hollywood's "assimilation of Hong Kong action filmmaking" (Feng, 2009: 15), or "one of Hollywood's approaches to capitalizing Chinese kung fu – a mode that integrates jets and computers *with* kung fu." (Li, 2005: 56, original emphasis). Some critics may regard the phenomenon within "a discourse of cultural syncretism" as "cross-pollenisation and transcendence of genre through transnational exchanges of ideas and expertise" (Pierson, 2002: 165), while others complain that "Hollywood's global domination is built precisely on this deliberate ignorance of cultural difference" (Pang, 2006: 63). However, for Hong Kong cinema, this only means that it is about to lose its last franchise to the global Hollywood film industry.

In his paper answering to the question "Does Hong Kong have to follow Hollywood to compete?" Kleinhans (2009: 119) argues that:

Technological and marketing dominance by Hollywood create conditions that make it virtually impossible to compete with it directly, head-on, and that its

overall system absorbs foreign elements, changing only in style rather than allowing significant “working from within.” A competent response has to find an alternative strategy, but this involves asking what is “success” in this competition: economic? ideological? or artistic?

To the cash-conscious Hong Kong film industry, which at the moment receives no direct government subsidy or protection policy such as an import or screen quota, the only alternative to emulating Hollywood would be embracing it while exploiting the government protected Mainland market. An illustration of this approach is Stephen Chow and Centro Digital’s next heavily CGI enhanced project — *Kung Fu Hustle* (*Gong Fu*, 2004), a film not only breaking the Hong Kong box-office record set by *Shaolin Soccer*, but also making a breakthrough by tapping into two important markets, the US and China. This film is a joint production with the China Film Group (a PRC State-owned conglomerate with interests ranging from film production, through distribution and exhibition), Huayi Brothers (China’s first listed private film production company) and Columbia Asia, a Hollywood local-language enterprise launched by Sony in 1998 under the Hollywood “glocalisation” strategy (Robinson, 2006, as cited in Klein, 2007: 193). Klein (2007: 202-203) regards *Kung Fu Hustle* as “emblematic of the Hong Kong industry’s transformation under the pressures of globalisation”, that,

the film is likewise a marker of the Chinese film industry’s efforts to transform itself from a state-run instrument of education and propaganda into a viable commercial industry.....As a result of co-productions and the increased openness of its market to Hong Kong films, China is gradually absorbing the Hong Kong industry and eroding the boundaries that have kept them separate for 50 years.

I would like to add one more point to her insightful comments on *Kung Fu Hustle* – that this transnational cooperation also demonstrates Hollywood’s strategy of taking advantage of not only Hong Kong cinema’s talents and expertise, but also its quasi-domestic status in China to bypass China’s import quota. Therefore, under the double pressures from China’s commercialisation imperative and Hollywood’s “glocalisation” strategy, the already precarious local identity of Hong Kong is becoming even more vulnerable in the international arena.

1.2 Representing Hong Kong in the International Arena

The transnational mode of production employed in *Kung Fu Hustle* was made in the wake of the success of the above-mentioned Chinese-language benchmark – *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), the only Oscar-winning Chinese-language film to date. However, before *Kung Fu Hustle*’s commercial success, there was an ill-fated attempt to re-establish the “Hong Kong film” brand in the international film circle through this Hong Kong-China-US co-production model— the 2002 film *The Touch*. However, it was disqualified as a Hong Kong entry for the Academy Awards in the category of Best Foreign Language Film because of its all English dialogue. This disqualification mirrors the predicament of Hong Kong cinema in asserting a local identity in its “going global” effort before the Mainland presence became a challenge to it in the post-CEPA era.

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon is hitherto the highest-grossing foreign-language film in American history with a spectacular box-office of US\$128 million in the US market (Box Office Mojo), besides \$112 million revenue in video sales there (Klein, 2004: 18). This commercial triumph should partially be attributed to its winning of the Academy

Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Since a cultural event like the Academy Awards has the economic power to influence film consumption globally, Chan (2008: 98) notes that “increasingly, the potential for Oscar nomination is often factored into the marketing strategy for producers of non-English films.”

As a transnational co-production involving capital, technology and skilled personnel across the US, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Mainland China, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* can only be classified as a “Chinese-language” film and is recognised as “a beacon of cultural China” (Davis & Yeh, 2008: 25). However, the film was submitted for the Academy Awards as a Taiwanese entry as it was directed by US-based Taiwanese director Ang Lee. In the wake of its success, two other such trans-Chinese or pan-Chinese co-produced martial arts movies were submitted for the 2002 Academy Awards as PRC and Hong Kong entries respectively, *Hero (Ying Xiong)* and *The Touch (Tian Mai)*. Directed by the leading Mainland director Zhang Yimou, *Hero* was nominated and grossed a total of US\$53.7 million in the US market, and ranked third among foreign-language films in the US market so far (Box Office Mojo). However, the Hong Kong entry *The Touch* was disqualified because of its “more English than Mandarin” dialogue.

In her paper “When is a foreign-language film not a foreign-language film? When it has too much English in it: The case of a Singapore film and the Oscars”, Felicia Chan (2008) uses the example of an Oscar-disqualified Singapore film *Be With Me* (2005) to highlight a “perennial post-colonial conundrum” (p.97) – the ambivalent role of the English language in the making of a cultural identity. However, although English is among the official languages in both of the two post-colonial city/states, Hong Kong and Singapore, the case of Hong Kong film *The Touch* is slightly different, as it is an

Indiana Jones-styled adventure story set in Tibetan mountains and Northwest China deserts. While the mix of English, Hokkien and Mandarin in the Singapore film “underlies a collective Singaporean cultural identity, rather than a Chinese, Malay, or Indian one” (Chan, 2008: 100), the all-English policy in *The Touch* is what the film critic Bryan Walsh (2002: n.pag.) called “a slick internationalism.”

Like the heavy dose of CGI, this internationalism through English dialogue is, in fact, one part of the self-Hollywoodisation strategy of Hong Kong cinema since the late 1990s. Immediately before *The Touch*, Hong Kong had submitted a film named *Fulltime Killer* (*Quan Zhi Sha Shou*, 2001) for the Academy Awards Best Foreign Language Film. This is an action film about an Interpol detective and two hitmen from Hong Kong and Japan respectively, thus the film is also mainly in English, with only a supplementary amount of Cantonese and Japanese (which saved it from being disqualified). Another example is Hong Kong cultural ambassador Jackie Chan’s film *Who am I?* (*Wo Shi Shui?*, 1998), which also employs a mix of English, Cantonese and even some South African vernacular. In the film Jackie Chan plays a CIA agent who gets amnesia on a mission travelling across South Africa, Australia and the Netherlands, “but specially bypasses locations in Hong Kong” (Zhang, 2004: 269). Through adopting the Hollywood high-concept approach, this film ranked second in that year’s Hong Kong box-office after the CGI extravaganza *The Storm Raiders*.

Since this major hit *Who am I?* is Jackie Chan’s first movie after the 1997 changeover, the title is often quoted by scholars to indicate the identity obsession, confusion or even crisis of post-1997 Hong Kong (Teo, 2000: n.pag; Fore, 2001: 137). Zhang (2004: 269) also notes that, “the figure of the lone wanderer or drifter” is crucial to the post-1997 films taking up the motif of amnesia. Besides *Who Am I?* (1998), *Purple Storm* (*Zi Yu*

Feng Bao, 1999), another high-concept film, is about a former terrorist suffering from post-traumatic amnesia coming to work for the Hong Kong police force. Zhang (2004: 269) argues that amnesia here functions at the same time as “a device of forgetting” and as “a reminder of the unresolved question of identity and the future of Hong Kong”, and the question of “who am I?” is replaced with “Who do you want to be?.” This question stood out in Hong Kong cinema with its failed attempt at representing Hong Kong with the Oscar-customised English-language film *The Touch* and was actually explored and interrogated in Hong Kong’s next entry for the Academy, *Infernal Affairs* (*Wu Jian Dao*, 2002).

Infernal Affairs, a story about two double-cross moles infiltrating the Police and the Triad, is regarded as “an allegorical tale about post-colonial Hong Kong” caught up with the crisis of identity (V. Lee, 2009:140). The double-identity problem and the intricate “right and wrong” moral dilemma both speak to the Hong Kong people “whose shaky configuration of political and moral subjectivity is [at] stake” (Law, 2006). Having been “hailed as a landmark Hollywood-style ‘high concept’ blockbuster in Hong Kong cinema” (V. Lee, 2009: 16), *Infernal Affairs*, as Hong Kong’s 2003 entry, did not impress the Academy jury, but it did a Hollywood producer. The script was bought for a Hollywood remake — *The Departed* (2006) by Martin Scorsese, which became an Academy Awards Best Picture winner while the original was barely remembered outside the Chinese-speaking audiences, at least not distinctively as a Hong Kong film. In the 79th Academy Award telecast, the winner *The Departed* was incorrectly referred to as based on a “Japanese film.” This harmless mistake has actually revealed the hazy understanding of Asian cinemas among the general English-speaking audiences. It is this lack of understanding or real interest in Asian cinemas that has motivated the Hollywood remaking of Asian films trend as I have pointed out

elsewhere (He, 2010).



Figure 5.4-5 Movie Posters of *Infernal Affairs* (2002) and its Hollywood remake *The Departed* (2006)

In fact, *The Departed*, the Hollywood version of Hong Kong's *Infernal Affairs*, was the most successful example of the popular trend of Hollywood using remakes to “‘white-wash’ Asian popular cinema for a wider Euro-American audience” (Marchetti, 2007: 1). Remaking Asian films, together with the aforementioned Hollywood assimilation of Hong Kong action choreography, has greatly thwarted Hong Kong cinema's ambition of restoring its transnational reputation by self-Hollywoodisation. The frustrated “Oscar crusade,” therefore, has adjusted Hong Kong cinema's strategy from fighting for international recognition to accommodating the soon-to-be-acquired domestic market in the Chinese mainland.

First released at the end of 2002, *Infernal Affairs* was not theatrically screened in the Mainland. Neither was *Infernal Affairs II*, a prequel to the first installment, bringing the story from six years after 1997 to six years before. However, the sequel, also the last installment of the film series, made the breakthrough into the Mainland and also marked Hong Kong cinema's shift of attention to the Chinese mainland. *Infernal Affairs III* was

among the first co-productions with the Mainland after the signing of the CEPA in July 2003, and was given an extraordinary promotion. On December 8, 2003, *Infernal Affairs III* held a splendid première at the Great Hall of the People, the PRC's parliament building located at the western edge of Beijing Tiananmen Square (Sohu.com, Dec 3, 2003). This is also an opening of the “nationalisation” trend of Hong Kong cinema under “one country”, although some Hong Kong filmmakers resisted the change with an emphasis on “two systems.”

2. Becoming “One Country”: Reluctance to Reconciliation

As a co-production with the Mainland, the triad-themed *Infernal Affair III* has adjusted its original emphasis on the undercover experiences to an “anti-crime morality tale” (Davis & Yeh, 2008: 105), though not in a preposterous way as in some of the other co-productions. It is a fact that the current film censorship in the Mainland is still preventing the Hong Kong filmmakers from full commitment to the Mainland market. On the other side of the story, the Mainland taboos have actually turned out to grant Hong Kong filmmakers some leverage to delineate their unique Hong Kong identity, as “local identities can be measured by the extent of difference from the national” (Fung, 2001: 594). The sensitive and sometimes absolutely prohibited gangster/crime and ghost/horror genres have thus become a sanctuary for Hong Kong social, if not totally political, emotions and attitudes towards post-1997 and post-CEPA changes.

2.1 Gangster/Crime Movies: Anachronism as Resistance to Change

“May this moment stay forever” (yuan ci ke yong liu)

From Victim (Mu Lu Xiong Guang, 1999, dir. Ringo Lam Ling-Tung)

In her paper on a 1999 crime thriller *Victim*, Esther Yau (2009: 255) used the term “anachronistic temporality” to analyse a haunted house where the Chinese characters “*May this moment stay forever*” (*Yuan Ci ke Yuang Liu*) were scrawled in blood on the wall from a family murder-suicide committed thirty years ago. As Yau indicates, this term is borrowed from Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, who argued that “anachronistic time provokes a sense of accountability for the injustices and unfulfilled expectations of the past, and a respect for justice toward humans already dead or not yet alive” (Yau: 2009: 255). Yau takes the movie *Victim* as an example to examine how Hong Kong crime and police thriller directors “rework the action genre to address bleak emotional expressions” (ibid: 255) in the post-1997 era — not only related to the political changeover, but also to the devastating Asian Financial Crisis. As aforementioned, the crisis has severely impaired the overseas markets of the Hong Kong film industry. To Hong Kong people, the crisis had turned a lot of middle-class property owners into “negative asset” owners when the real estate’s price plummeted and their mortgage loans were onerous. This economic restructuring had even led to some extreme cases of family killing in Hong Kong. The movie *Victim* cleverly links this turbulent aftermath of economic upheaval to the historically significant Hong Kong “1967 Riot”, through the haunted house where the family murder and suicide took place in 1967.



Figure 5.6 Still from *Victim* (1999), Chinese characters of “May this moment stay forever” in blood on a crime scene wall

In *Victim*, both the police detective and the “negative asset” victim-turned-criminal who encounter each other in this haunted house are facing family crises related to, or resulting from, the changing economic and social conditions in Hong Kong. Yau (2009: 255) points out that the “anachronistic time” indicated by the blood words “May this moment stay forever” on the wall serves as “a metaphorical *d ǵ à vu* of the city’s crisis culture” and “has a prophetic quality regarding masculinity’s deadly dealings.” By “masculinity’s deadly dealings”, Yau (2009: 257) refers to the tragedy for “a decent male citizen... killing the whole family in rage and despair flips from responsibility to destruction.” However, I would like to interpret the prophetic sentence more literally as the male character’s desperate action of retarding change by the ending life as a self-deceiving means to stop time.

On the one hand, the protagonist, who is about to lose his house due to the huge mortgage debt, is a reflection of the social issues of the ordeal of Hong Kong; while on the other, I would argue, the lost house and precarious family relation is a metaphor of the lost Hong Kong identity, whether it was based on the status of a crown colony or simply on the affluence and prosperity of the city. As the protagonist, who is afraid of his girlfriend leaving him, threaten her with a knife, and shouted to her that “You said you loved this house and I promise you that we will live in here for life... the world is changing so fast but you should not change, and we should not change.” Similar expressions of being upset by the changes in life are heard in the protagonist’s recurring hysterical lines, such as “Why is the world changing so fast? Is there ever anything in life that we can keep?” All these expressions of wistful putting off change or reluctance of accepting them after 1997 echoes the words “May this moment stay forever” left by a victim/murderer from thirty years ago, and “is a locus of the ‘fantastic’ anachronistic temporality” (Yau, 2009: 255).

Different from the resistance of change expressed in *Victim* (1999) which was made in the years immediately after Hong Kong's reunification with the PRC, in the movies made a decade later, the motif of anachronism reoccurs more explicitly through the embodiment of newly released prisoners after serving decades in jail. Their confusion or conversion is a reminder of the changes as a *fait accompli* in Hong Kong, and in Hong Kong cinema itself. The 2009 movie *To Live and Die in Mongkok* (Wang Jiao Jian Yu, 2009) portrays a gangster killer who has just finished his almost three decades term in jail and returns to his home in Mongkok (the busiest district in Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong), only to find that it is beyond recognition. Through the anachronistic perspective of the social outcast through his "culture shock", the movie compresses and emphasises the gradual changes that happened over almost three decades time since the early 1980s. That is the time when the Hong Kong issue was first brought to negotiation between Britain and PRC, and the most rapid economic development taking place on the Chinese mainland. The movie title alludes to the 2004 gangster/drama *One Nite in Mongkok* (Wang Jiao Hei Ye), which had brought Derek Yee Tung-sing Best Director and Screenplay at the HKFA, but is notorious for its alternative Mainland version (as I have discussed in chapter three). In only five years, even the dual-version strategy has gradually disappeared, given the consideration that it curtails the Mainland box-office since the "savvy" audience would go straight to the pirate copies for the "authentic" version.

Being a strictly "not-for-the PRC" gangster themed movie, *To Live and Die in Mongkok* obvious laments for the bygone "good days" of Hong Kong cinema through self-mockery of "Hong Kong films", or more specifically, of the gangster genre itself. When the killer goes to the theater to watch a mid-night show as in the 1980s, he is told that there are no more John Woo and no more Hong Kong movies, but only the Mainland

co-productions. A less poignant but more profound satire is made in *Once a Gangster* (*Fei Sha Feng Zhong Zhuan*, 2010), in which at the beginning of the movie the female boss of a restaurant turns down a telephone booking for Steven Spielberg in a flamboyant way and brags “Spielberg who? My last dinner table is reserved for Director Feng Xiaogang” – the most “bankable” Chinese mainland film director.

Like *To Live and Die in Mongkok*, *Once a Gangster* also involves a just released gang leader coming out of jail after eighteen years. However, this time it is his triad followers who are being anachronistic by hoping for a restoration of their legend in the old days with his comeback. However, the leader himself has developed an interest in economist Milton Friedman while serving his term in jail, and now claims that he is following another gang – “the Chicago School of Economics.” As its English title suggests, *Once a Gangster* is, in fact, a jeering summation of the history of Hong Kong gangster/crime genre in a typical “all too extravagant, too gratuitously wild” Hong Kong style, as David Bordwell (2000: 1) labeled Hong Kong cinema in his book *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment*.

The pivotal point of this gangster movie is the word “gangster” in a “past perfect” sense in this already changed era. The Chinese movie title, and also its theme song “Drifting Sand in the Wind” (literal translation from *Fei Sha Feng Zhong Zhuan*), is from the popular theme song of a 1989 gangster movie *Triads: The Inside Story* (*Wo Zai Hei She Hui De Ri Zi*), starring action movie icon Chow Yun-fat. The main casts are from the most influential gangster movie franchise *Young and Dangerous* (*Gu Huo Zai*, 1996-2000), which has spawned seven sequels and numerous spin-offs. The buffoonish police undercover agent is a ludicrous mimic of the police undercover agent with the same name *A Ren* in *Infernal Affairs* series (*Wu Jian Dao*, 2002-03), while the central plot of

the Triad election is a farcical subversion of the Hong Kong democracy-themed political allegorical gangster movie *Election* (*Hei She Hui* 2005) and its sequel *Election 2* (a.k.a *Triad Election*) (2006).

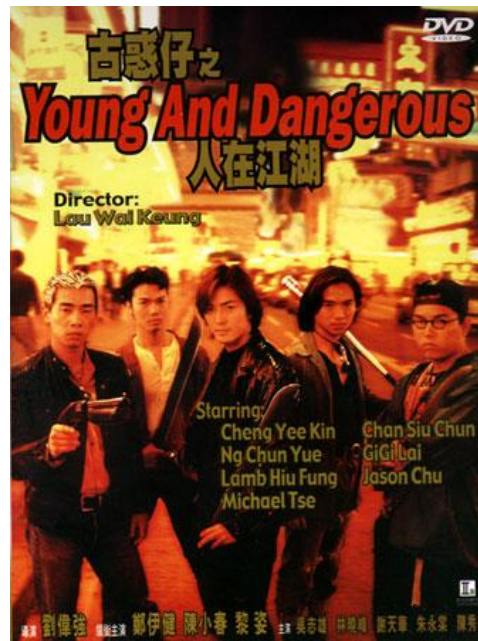


Figure 5.7 DVD cover of *Young and Dangerous* (1996) starring Cheng Yee Kin (middle)



Figure 5.8 Still from *Once a Gangster* (2010) also starring Cheng Yee Kin (left) as a gangster-turned-academic

To highlight the motif of anachronism, the once impetuous gangsters coming out from *Young and Dangerous* more than a decade ago, have become the reluctant candidates for the triad election in *Once a Gangster*. One of them is determined to go to the best

university to study economics, while the other has already established himself as a successful, legitimate restaurant owner, and is now a loving husband/father who only cares about buying expensive handbags for his wife and sending his children to prestigious schools. Following up the famous punch line in Johnnie To Kei-Fung's *Election* "The Triad started electing their chairman even earlier than we elect our chief executive" as discussed in Chapter 3, the undercover police officer in *Once a Gangster*, criticises the "cage democracy" in triad elections in an unctuous manner by saying that, "The problem lies in the more than 30 per cent annual increase in the economy of the triad society in recent years. As long as the triad society can keep going with the booming economy, no one would care what the old leaders are up to. Therefore, it is not the problem of the election system but the problem with our civic consciousness. If only we could spend more efforts on the citizenship education on the civic consciousness....."

The heavy intertextual and social references in *Once a Gangster* mark it with distinct Hong Kong cultural specificity, which is understood tacitly by only the local audience. Meanwhile, under the guise of the gangster genre, it is in fact a wistful comedy paying homage to Hong Kong gangster movies in the twilight of this globally influential Hong Kong genre. At the end of the movie, the elected triad leader has even made an award-receiving like speech in which he extended his gratitude to Andrew Lau Wai-Keung, the director of both the *Young and Dangerous* and *Infernal Affairs* series.

2.2 Ghost/Horror Movies: Haunted by the Changing Present

"Forget the unhappy past! The future is more important."

From The First 7th Night (Tou Qi, 2009, dir. Herman Yau Lai-To)

“Simultaneous haunting from the past and the future” is what Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar (2006: 40) identify as one of the features of pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema “where the past and the future both break down the barriers separating them from the present and operate as metaphors for each other” (p.41). This argument is illustrated by arguably the most important Hong Kong ghost film *Rouge (Yan Zhi Kou, 1987)* (Abbas, 1997; Chow, 2001; Lim,2001), as “the nostalgia for a disappeared past is made more poignant by the audience’s knowledge that Hong Kong itself was earmarked to disappear into the People’s Republic in 1997” (Berry & Farquhar, 2006: 40).

This “double haunting”, as Berry and Farquhar (2006: 41) note, “is by no means confined to the ghost film,” and still characterises Hong Kong’s temporal condition after 1997 (p.41). They use the Cannes Film Festival award-winning film *In the Mood for Love (Hua Yang Nian Hua, 2000)*, directed by the internationally-acclaimed Hong Kong *auteur* Wong Kar-wai, to illustrate their argument. By examining this melancholy romance set in 1960s Hong Kong as a haunted film, more specifically, a film which produces “haunted time without the FIGURE of the ghost” (Berry & Farquhar, 2006: 41 original capital letters), they argue that:

In the Mood for Love also narrates the post-1997 mood through a nostalgic allegory haunted by both past and future. In this way, it produces Hong Kong’s post-1997 temporal condition as one that continues to resist incorporation into the linear time of the nation-state.

(Berry and Farquhar, 2006: 41)

Berry and Farquhar (2006) see this post-1997 nostalgia as a result of an “inability to imagine the future” and the desire to seek stability in the past (Cheung, 2004: 264).

However, in analysing the “haunted films” since 2004, I argue that in the post-CEPA era, the “haunting” is more from the present rather than the future. In the cases of *Dumplings* (Jiao Zi, 2004, dir. Fruit Chan) and *Koma* (Jiu Ming, 2004, dir. Chi-Leung Law), replacing the nostalgia for the past, “the FIGURE of ghost” is taking the form of supernatural/superstitious traditional Chinese medicine, or modern Western technology of surgery, to solve the pressing problem/illness of the present.

Both of the two psychological thrillers were released in the year 2004, when the northbound trend of Hong Kong cinema started. However, horror films, especially the ghost theme, are blocked out of the socialist, atheist Mainland market by the censors. So the horror genre continues to seek its space in the Asia market through pan-Asian cooperation. The full length feature *Dumplings* was expanded from one segment of an Asian horror film *Three... Extremes* (San Geng 2, 2004), consisting of three unrelated segments respectively from Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan. This omnibus mode of pan-Asia collaboration was initiated by Hong Kong film director/producer Peter Chan Ho-sun. In 2002, he produced such a horror compilation named *Three* (San Geng) with two other directors from South Korea and Thailand. In the film *Three*, the segment directed by Peter Chan himself is called *Going Home* (Hui Jia), a story about a monomaniacal husband who had been preserving and tending to his wife’s dead body with Chinese herbs for years, in the belief that she will come back to him. This motif of retarding change echoes the above mentioned “May this moment stay forever” in the crime film *Victim* (1999). In the post-CEPA era, this topic of simply resisting change is extended into a more complicated interrogation of the cause and effect of the ineluctable change in the Hong Kong segment *Dumplings* in the sequel *Three... Extremes*. This time the necrophilia in *Going Home* is replaced with cannibalism.

Dumplings is about a rich, middle-aged Hong Kong woman seeking rejuvenation of her beauty by consuming dumplings made of aborted human fetuses. Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009: 196) reads the story as a parable “making direct associations between the horror text and the cultural political alienations embedded in the Hong Kong/China encounter.” As Lee (2009) suggests, the special dumplings provided by the sinister mainland female doctor has turned the Hong Kong woman into a “cannibalistic monster,” as the camera captures “the subtle changes in her facial expression, from frantic repulsion to detached acceptance to vacant craving” (p.197).



Figure 5.9-10 Stills from *Dumplings* (2004), the changing facial expressions of the Hong Kong woman while she is having human fetus dumplings

V. Lee (2009) imputes the allegorical meaning of “dumplings” as “a perpetuation of an inhuman and dehumanizing medical/political regime” of the socialist China (p.195). I would add to this argument that the female protagonist’s desperation to restore her youth could also be read as a metaphor of Hong Kong in its effort to recover from the economic downturn. What is projected onto the “evil” yet effective dumplings which the protagonist is unable to resist is the ambivalent feeling and attitude towards Hong Kong’s increasing dependence on China’s new wealth, and Hong Kong’s ineluctable economic integration with China “on the rise.”

Dumplings was shot and released in the years around the signing of the CEPA in 2003.

Since the once futuristic 1997 “apocalypticism” had already been cast in the past without any major political upheaval, Hong Kong was more troubled by the present economic recession. In the first six years after the 1997 changeover, Hong Kong was hit by a series of disasters such as the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis, the 1997 Avian Flu Outbreak, the 2000 “Dotcom Bubble” burst (Xiao, 2007: 193), and the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pandemic. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Hong Kong decreased more than 9.5 per cent from HK\$1,365,024 million in 1997 to the bottom of 1,234,761 million in 2003 (Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department) . The recovery had only started when the preferential economic policy of CEPA took effect in 2004. That year saw an increase of 4.6 per cent and in the next consecutive three years, the annual increasing rate of growth was steady at about 7- 9 per cent (Ibid).

To Hong Kong, the troubled present is haunted by the uncanny presence of the PRC as an unexpectedly benign motherland taking the stance of financial savior. The cinematic haunting present/presence “without the figure of [the] ghost” is made more explicit in another 2004 Hong Kong horror film, *Koma (Jiu Ming)*, with a love triangle plot spiced with a cat-and-mouse game compelled by attempted kidney theft. In the end of the movie, the female lead, a wealthy yet weak girl who is slowly dying from kidney failure, has just survived a brutal chase and fight. However, she wakes up from a coma only to find that she has been, against her will, implanted a kidney to save her life. This kidney used to belong to her love rival, also the murderer of her beloved boyfriend. This imposed transplantation is part of a deliberate plan by the *femme fatale* character, who herself is also dead. The movie ends in the protagonist screaming and begging the doctor to remove the kidney, and then the haunting voiceover of the murderer “You’ll owe me this forever.” This last plot twist, as Knee (2009) suggests, reveals a “sense of

discomfort over intimacy with and (bodily) indebtedness to an economic Other” (p.83).

Both the life-saving kidney and the youth-restoring dumplings refer to the “crucial motif of profound and inescapable debt to the Other – and in particular to the vitality and to the body of this Other” (Knee, 2009: 83). In fact, this intense anxiety about depending on or receiving help from the Other had already appeared in *The Eye* (*Jian Gui*, literally *Seeing Ghost*, 2002), also played by the same leading actress in *Koma*, but with a different emphasis. As an earlier pan-Asian production of Peter Chan, *The Eye* tells a story about a Hong Kong girl who starts seeing mysterious images foretelling death after she receives cornea transplantation. The climax of the movie is a tension-breaking scene where the heroine, for the first time in her life, sees a picture of herself. She is shocked to find herself a total stranger as the image in the picture is different from the one that she sees in the mirror since she gained her sight. In her hysterical reaction, the plot reveals that her mirror reflection, which she used to believe to be herself, actually belongs to her dead cornea donor, a wronged ghost seeking justice. Unlike the “cannot-live-without” kidney or “once-taken-is-taken” dumplings that will haunt the protagonists for the rest of their lives, *The Eye* ends with the girl having the psychic cornea removed and returning to her former sightless but peaceful life.

Therefore, we can see that the key motif in *The Eye* is not so much an “inescapable debt to the Other” as in “confusion over identity” or “misrecognition of self” (Knee, 2009: 75) after the change (the eye surgery). The act of removing the cornea and returning to the past condition in *The Eye* is redolent of what Berry and Farquhar (2006) note in *In the Mood for Love*, “Hong Kong’s post-1997 temporal condition as [is] one that continues to resist incorporation into the linear time of the nation-state”(p.41).

From the post-1997 resistance to adapting to the post-CEPA inexorable change, Hong Kong cinema is moving from the double haunting of the future and the past to the haunting of the present. Producer/Director Peter Chan Ho-sin, the initiator and advocate of pan-Asian collaboration on horror films, has also moved on to Mainland co-production. His 2005 Mainland focused *Moulin Rouge*-styled musical *Perhaps Love* (*Ru Guo Ai*, as discussed in Chapter 4), his first triumph, followed several other big-budget major hits such as *The Warlords* (*Tou Ming Zhuang*, 2007) and *Bodyguards and Assassins* (*Shi Yue Wei Cheng*, 2009) (which will later be discussed in detail in chapter seven). The ghost/horror films, as “generically impaired” for the atheist Mainland market, are further marginalised small budget, niche market cult movies criticised as “horror for the sake of horror.” Some of the ghost movies have taken an interesting melodramatic turn as in *The First 7th Night* (*Tou Qi*, 2009) and *Written By* (*Zai Sheng Hao*, 2009). Both movies take a replaying narrative to solve the misunderstanding of, or yearning for, a deceased family member. In these ghost films in disguise, the key motif lies no longer in the horror or haunting effect, but in consolation for the living, and persuading them to let go the past and face the future.

As for Hong Kong cinema itself, this motif sounds more like self-referential preaching for accepting the changes brought by the co-production— that Hong Kong cinema is gradually integrated into Chinese cinema based on the Mainland market. While at the same time, Hong Kong cinema, in the narrow sense, is becoming more dependent and focused on Hong Kong local support in an effort to assert its unique cultural identity.

3. Becoming “Hong Kong” (again): Preserving and Persevering

In the year 2007, two important changes happened to the Hong Kong film industry.

First, the local film magazine *City Entertainment (Dian Ying Shuang Zhou Kan)* ceased publication after 28 years servicing the local industry. Second, the establishment of the Hong Kong Film Development Council (HKFDC) by the Hong Kong SAR government, which started to finance directly small-to-medium budget local film production. These changes are undeniably related to the deteriorating industrial condition of Hong Kong cinema in the previous year. In 2006, both the number of Hong Kong films produced and their box-office revenue in the Hong Kong market hit a historical low. There were only 51 Hong Kong films produced in 2006, including 39 co-productions. These local films have generated 282 million HK\$ in the Hong Kong domestic film market, about 51 per cent of the box office revenue in 1997 (Hong Kong yearbook).

For the bi-weekly *City Entertainment* magazine, the production of 51 films a year meant that, in 2006, it had only two films to cover for each issue. Founded in 1979, it is a detailed record of the development of Hong Kong cinema and had initiated the Hong Kong Film Awards. However, this local film magazine could not survive the industry downturn, as the once truly self-sufficient Hong Kong film industry itself is turning to the SAR government support for survival.

3.1 Government Subsidised Hong Kong Films

The Hong Kong SAR government has shown its attention to the local film industry since its establishment in 1997. In his first Policy Address delivered in October 1997, the Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa announced that in 1998 a Film Services Office would be set up to help the industry with production and location shooting. Also, in order to promote dialogue between the industry and Government, a Film Services Advisory Committee would be established and chaired by the Secretary for

Broadcasting, Culture and Sport (Tung, 1997).

Following the establishment of the two organisations in 1998, the Film Development Fund (FDF) was set up in 1999 under the auspices of the Commerce & Economic Development Bureau to support projects conducive to the long-term development of the film industry in Hong Kong. However, at the beginning, the fund had not been involved in the direct financing of individual film production but only limited to sponsoring the promotion events or projects of the Hong Kong film industry as a whole (such as the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF) since 2000). Also, the Film Guarantee Fund (FGF) Scheme, with a maximum commitment of HK\$30 million, was first introduced in 2003, to “assist local film production companies to obtain loans from local participating lending institutions (PLIs) for producing films” (HKFDC website). Altogether there are five banks participating in the scheme as lending institutions and, as at the end of 2008, the total amount of the FGF is HK\$2.37 million for 12 films.

To respect artistic freedom, the Hong Kong Government does not look into the theme or content of the film in considering applications for the FGF loan guarantee. To Hong Kong filmmakers, this promise is a great advantage compared to the co-production mode, which is subject to the constricting film regulation of the PRC. As for the more recent government-injected HK\$300 million to the Film Development Fund (FDF) since 2007, the Film Development Council has also promised not to vet the content of scripts of the film productions (FDC press release, 2007). However, market viability is still the essential criterion for the funding. Although some filmmakers complain that “they [FDF vetting committee] are more calculating than any other commercial organisation” (HAF web site, 2010), the FDF is playing a very important role in nurturing new talents for the industry and supporting the small budget films in which

the commercial film companies are reluctant to invest.

Up to mid-2010, among all 13 approved FDF applications, six directors are directing their first commercial productions (FDC press release, 2010a). Moreover, the small budget film can often recoup the costs from the Hong Kong market alone through certain violent or erotic genres. The commercial film companies are most reluctant to invest in the more serious, medium budget films without taking the Mainland market into consideration. Therefore, the FDF's role in filling this gap becomes prominent and rewarding. According to Jack So Chak-Kwong, the Chairman of the Hong Kong Film Development Council, "the FDF aimed to finance film productions with a budget not exceeding \$12 million and employing a certain number of Hong Kong talents. The funding support would be capped at 30 per cent of the production budget, that is, a maximum of \$3.6 million per film" (FDC press release, 2007). In February 2010, a FDF co-funded film *Echoes of the Rainbow* (*Sui Yue Shen Tou*, literally, *Time the Thief*) won the Crystal Bear for the Best Feature Film in the Generation Kplus section of the 60th Berlinale (FDC press release, 2010b).

Echoes of the Rainbow is a tear-jerking drama about a shoe-maker's family set in the 1960s from the perspective of the eight-year-old son. The film was shot on the historic Wing Lee Street which, according to the director Alex Law Kai-Yui, is the only place he could find in Hong Kong that still retained the city's 1960s characteristics. Before the film was shot there, the street was already included in a demolition and redevelopment program announced in November 2008 by the Hong Kong Urban Renewal Authority (URA). However, influenced by the publicity of the film after winning the Berlin Crystal Bear, the URA soon put forward a new proposal in March 2010 to conserve all 12 buildings in Wing Lee Street, rather than only three as originally planned (Hong

Kong Development Bureau, 2010). To this news, the film producer Mabel Cheung Yuen-ting commented, “The film will be forgotten soon. But the street, if conserved, will leave a mark of history” (Lu, 2010).



Figure 5.11 Movie poster of *Echoes of the Rainbow* (2010)

A nostalgic melodrama on 1960s Hong Kong

In fact, in the post-colonial era, in order to preserve or find a Hong Kong local cultural identity against the mainland Chinese one, “ironically Hong Kong’s colonial heritage has become a cultural asset — a key element in its collective memory and in its claim for difference and separateness (L. O.-F. Lee, 2007: 504). This argument explains the radical activists’ movement against the demolition of the Star Ferry Pier for land reclamation (Yang, 2007), and then the preservation campaign of the Queen’s Pier (both in 2007). Hong Kong cultural scholars Lo and Pang (2007: 356) contend that,

The ‘save-the-Star-Ferry’ event has a special meaning for Hong Kong’s development of civil society, as the movement materialises the notion of the ‘public’, both in the sense of space and in the sense of identity. It also demonstrates the complexity of colonial sensations in the current postcolonial

Hong Kong, where public sensibility does not necessarily emerge as a sheer nostalgia for the colonial days but may take shape as a positive forward-looking assertion of one's unique history and identity.

With regard to the withering of Hong Kong cinema, at the FDF funded symposium "Hong Kong cinema: Beyond Co-production", local filmmaker Lawrence Cheng Tan-Shui made a sad but stirring analogy that "Hong Kong film is like Wing Lee Street, We are the one insisting on shooting Hong Kong film. We are Wing Lee Street." (HAF web site, 2010) However, apart from colonial cultural heritage and collective memory, the "one country, two systems" model also helps Hong Kong to preserve a distinctive (film) culture from the Mainland Chinese one. The label of "Hong Kong films", besides the small number of imported non-co-productions, is beginning to connote culturally the films which are not available in the Mainland.

3.2 "Hong Kong Specificity" As Guaranteed by "Two Systems"

In his discussion of "Australian Cinema as a National Cinema", Tom O'Regan (2002) points out that Hollywood is "a particular term of reference" (p.91). He says, "There is Hollywood, and there are national cinemas" (Ibid: 90). However, within the territory of Chinese national cinema which Hong Kong cinema is partly integrated into, the "two systems" scheme has guaranteed a fragment of Hong Kong cinema based on its local cultural and political specificities. In these "pure Hong Kong films", the sense of familiarity based on the local social issues and locales is usually combined with the Mainland-prohibited subjects or genres such as ghost, same-sex love, ultra-violence and softcore erotica. Therefore, the once de-territorialised Hong Kong cinema is going through a re-territorialisation within the "one country" to demarcate its specificity as

guaranteed by the fifty-year promise of “two systems.”

One of the key points of keeping Hong Kong unchanged as a special region of China is “the legal delineation and guarantee of a high degree of autonomy of Hong Kong” (Chen, 2007:162). With respect to film regulation, there are two laws currently in operation in Hong Kong: Chapter 390, the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (1963) and Chapter 392, the Film Censorship Ordinance (1988, rev. 1994) (Davis & Yeh, 2001). The former regulates the public circulation of indecent or offensive materials, while the latter introduces a three-tier film rating system to classify motion pictures by admissible audience. Although hardcore pornography is illegal in Hong Kong, the Category III films, or the adult-only category which contains explicit sex scenes and most of the time, grisly violence, are well within the law. Thus, the Category III film has become a distinct Hong Kong cinema type unavailable on the Mainland. They are becoming a kind of secular symbol of Hong Kong cinema as these films are deemed “inappropriate” to the “healthy” way of life in socialist Mainland China.

In the first decade since Category III was introduced in 1988, among all films submitted for classification (including Hong Kong produced and imported foreign films), Category III films usually accounted for 38 to 48 per cent of the total number (Davis & Yeh, 2001). However, due to the drastic reduction in Hong Kong local film production after the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis, the proportion of Category III films shrank accordingly to about 15- 20 per cent, and the number hit a bottom of 7 per cent in the context of the accelerated Mainland cooperation trend in 2006 (Hong Kong Year Book 1999-2009). In their paper “Warning! Category III: The Other Hong Kong Cinema”, Davis and Yeh (2001) divide Category III into three groups: first the quasi-

pornographic, which distinguishes itself from orthodox pornography by conveying moralistic messages; second, genre films such as gangster and crime being rated as adult only for its violent scenes and sometimes only for the “foul” language; and finally, “pornviolence” – a term borrowed from Tom Wolfe – is used to indicate the films “us[ing] shocking criminal events as justification for the depiction of violence, torture, and sexual perversion” (Davis and Yeh, 2001: 18). This last kind of Category III film is also named the “case file” film, as it is based on true stories “supposedly rescued from police files” and depends on its “recognition value” to attract local audiences (Ibid: 18). These films tend to amplify and fantasise the gruesome details of the crime simply for audience stimulation, such as the famous *The Untold Story* (*Ba Xian Fan Dian Zhi Ren Rou Chao Shao Bao*, 1993), which gained the lead actor Anthony Wong Chau-sang HKFA for Best Actor.

In the post-CEPA era dominated by Mainland co-productions, in the effort of highlighting Hong Kong social and cultural specificity, quite a few recent Hong Kong produced Category III films have adopted this “case file” form to elaborate on local crime reports. However, rather than exploiting its “‘ripped from the headlines’ immediacy and sensationalism that satisfies tabloid appetite” (Davis and Yeh, 2001: 18), these recent “pornviolence” films express more profound humanitarian concerns that impel social reform in the local community. Unlike the 1990s sensual approach, these films tend to de-emphasise the crime itself but extend also to the social problem behind it.

Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung’s film *Dream Home* (*Wei Duo Li Ya Yi Hao*, 2010) is a *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* styled crime thriller based on a true case in Hong Kong, but also satire of the high housing price problem in Hong Kong. The movie is about a

woman killing all the people living in and next to her coveted apartment to make the price of the apartment plummet to what she can afford. The movie starts with an intertitle giving the social background of the serial killer that “According to 2007 survey, the average income of Hong Kong resident is about HK\$10,100 per month and 24 per cent of residents are below the average income line. Ten years after the handover, the average income had increased 1 per cent. However, the house price has increased 15 per cent only in 2007. This is a crazy city. To survive in this city, you have to be crazier.” Moreover, in this movie a noteworthy detail is the footage of protests against the demolition of Queen’s Pier in 2007 (as mentioned earlier) appearing on TV within the story.

Another 2010 film *Girl\$* (*Nan Nan*, 2010) is also triggered by a true 2008 murder case of a 16-year-old girl who was involved in “compensated dating” (*enjo-kōsai*) in Hong Kong. This horrific murder and dismembering case has caused social panic and attention to the increasingly popular teenage girl compensated dating phenomenon in Hong Kong (Chiou, 2009). With the tragic murder briefly mentioned, the movie *Girl\$* probes the social causes and effects of the school girl-practised “compensated dating” phenomenon as a whole through the experiences of four girls. Although the sex scene is still a selling point of the low-budget film without any possibility to go into the Mainland market, this film has shown deep social concern about the Japan-originated *enjo-kōsai* practice getting more acceptance among Hong Kong youth.



Figure 5.12-13 Movie Posters of “Pornviolence” Category III Films:
Dream Home (2010) & *Girl\$* (2010)

Even the highly acclaimed arthouse film director Ann Hui On-Wah got her inspiration from a 2004 family violence story of an unemployed husband killing his wife and both their daughters, which took place in Tin Shui Wai new town. Hui made the *Tin Shui Wai* film series with two instalments released respectively in 2008 and 2009. After spending several years on the Mainland making co-produced films such as *Jade Goddess of Mercy* (*Yu Guan Yin*, 2003) and *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (*Yi Ma De Hou Xian Dai Sheng Huo*, 2006) (as discussed in chapter four), Ann Hui On-Wah returned to make something unique to Hong Kong. Her first project involves the two films about Tin Shui Wai, the so-called “City of Sadness” (*Bei Qing Cheng Shi*) in Hong Kong.

This new town is located in the northwestern part of the New Territories, Hong Kong and has only been developed by land reclamation since the 1990s to provide public housing estates to the less privileged, mostly the new immigrants from the Mainland. Due to the inconvenient transportation and lack of job opportunity, the town, with a population of about 270,000, attracts extensive reports from local media of family

killings and suicides since 2003. In 2006, after a suicide case of three young women in Tin Shui Wai, a high official from the Department of Social Welfare labelled the area “City of Sadness”, and soon was criticised for lack of a real effort in solving the social problem (Chan, 2006). In 2007, after another homicide-suicide family tragedy of a mentally disabled mother who killed her two young children while her husband was hospitalised with terminal cancer, the Hong Kong government enhanced its efforts in helping the local residents (Tsang & Chu, 2010).

In 2008, two films about the social predicament of Tin Shui Wai were screened in Hong Kong movie theatres: a dark violent Category III film *Besieged City* (*Wei Cheng*) on juvenile delinquency in the new town, and Ann Hui’s *The Way We Are* (*Tian Shui Wai De Ri Yu Ye*, literally, *Day and Night in Tin Shui Wai* 2008), a tranquil, touching account of ordinary life in Tin Shui Wai, showing resilient side of this “City of Sadness.” This movie is actually a by-product of the investigation in the town in preparation for making a movie based on the 2004 murder case, which is *Night and Fog* (*Tian Shui Wai De Ye Yu Wu*, literally, *Night and Fog in Tin Shui Wai*). This film was later released in 2009, one year after its first installment *Day and Night*. Due to its limited budget, *Day and Night* was shot entirely with HD-video camera, which unexpectedly gives the drama a documentary feeling. This social-realist or “ethnodocumentary” style movie portraying the true life of ordinary Hong Kong people thus brought Ann Hui Best Director Award at 2009 HKFA, and the veteran Hong Kong actress Paw Hee-Ching Best Actress Award for her part as an optimistic widow raising her teenage son. This was the first Best Actress Award won by a Hong Kong local since 2004 after the CEPA took effect (and lost their job opportunities to the Mainland actresses in most of the co-productions).

As the development of co-production further blurs the border between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese cinemas, the combination of controversial topics and the “geo-cultural proximity” factor is becoming more prominent in the “Not made for the Mainland” Hong Kong films. Ann Hui’s latest movie *All About Love (De Xian Chao Fan)* is a lesbian love story in which the Hong Kong landmark of the Central-Mid-levels escalators, the longest outdoor covered escalator system in the world, repeatedly appears. Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung’s urban romance *Love in a Puff (Zhi Ming Yu Chun Jiao, 2010)* depicts a love story between two people who meet each other in a back alley smoking spot as Hong Kong has banned indoor smoking at all restaurants and working places since 2007. The light comedy is full of Cantonese vogue gags but is given a Category III rating for its profane language. Depending on the local audience’s recognition of Hong Kong locales in the movie and their empathy for the local life stories, and combined with Mainland prohibited subjects, these small-budget Hong Kong films are still able to find a foothold in the local market and to become the witness or evidence of the “Hong Kong specificity” guaranteed by the “one country, two systems” policy.

Conclusion:

In the chapter on Hong Kong in an edited book *The Cinema of Small Nations*, Ackbar Abbas (2007: 113) views Hong Kong as a ‘para-site’ because of its “statelessness.” In the very last sentence of his article, Abbas (2007: 126) suggests that as Hong Kong cinema is “not capable of being a national cinema, it becomes a cinema of the fragment as nation.” His argument is based on his examination of mostly pre-1997 and a few post-1997 but pre-CEPA Hong Kong films. The major change in Hong Kong cinema, as I have explained in this chapter, took place in the post-CEPA era since 2004. Under the

great pressure of the global Hollywood, the once transnational Hong Kong cinema is now retreating to the yet-to-be-fully-marketised PRC market protected by the 20 imports per year quota. However, as the Mainland-coproduction trend is becoming overwhelming, Hong Kong cinema is, in fact, experiencing a “two-way split” of going “Chinese national” and going “Hong Kong local.” As Lo (2005) notes:

In the case of Hong Kong, the local is the transnational itself in its becoming. It emerges in between the national discourse and global structuralisation and remains fluctuating and unsettled rather than being fully articulated and self-present. (p.112)

Facing the re-nationalisation pressure as “one country”, the small number of “Not made for the PRC” Hong Kong films are ancillary but still essential in delineating Hong Kong cultural identity and specificity.

So far, in these three chapters I have focused on the co-existence of the “two systems” within “one country.” I have looked at their dissension and co-operation through Hong Kong cinema’s exploration of the newly-opened Mainland market and its efforts in maintaining its uninfluenced cultural uniqueness. Generally speaking, to the local film industry, the implementation of the “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong is acceptable. On the one hand, being in “one country” has allowed Hong Kong film preferential access to the Mainland and to benefit from its impressive economic development. On the other, the “two systems” formula has guaranteed the autonomous space for the Hong Kong film industry in avoiding total assimilation or integration into Mainland China. However, it would be superficial only to look at the co-relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland in order to understand how “one country, two

systems” policy is practised. In fact, the policy was originally put forward by the PRC to solve the Taiwan issue, and the model has also applied to Macao since December 1998. Therefore, in the following two chapters, I will move on to more complex, reflexive discussion on the meaning of “one country” for and the ultimate goal of its “reunification.” Through analysis of Hong Kong-produced Chinese diaspora films and Hong Kong-led pan-Chinese blockbusters, I will elucidate the interwoven relationships among different Chinese societies under the name of “one China” with varied interpretations.

Chapter Six

“Chineseness-es” Outside Mainland China:

Chinese Diasporas through Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema

Being Chinese outside China cannot possibly mean the same thing as inside. It varies from place to place, molded by the local circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living.

*“Can One Say No to Chineseness?
Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm”
by Ien Ang (1998:225)*

In previous chapters, I have been focusing on the changing dynamic between the “two systems” in Hong Kong and the Mainland in order to understand the practice of the “one country, two systems” policy in Hong Kong. In this chapter, I will shift my focus from the binary interaction of “two systems” to the contingency and complexity of China as “one country” through the representations of different “Chineseness-es” of the Chinese diasporas in Hong Kong films. I have discussed the major trend of the Mainland-oriented Hong Kong films and a comparatively small proportion of local productions emphasizing Hong Kong specificity. Apart from these two categories, there are still a number of Hong Kong films set in neither in the Mainland nor Hong Kong,

but in the Chinese diasporas. These films, though limited in number, are fairly influential and significant both artistically and socially, although not all of them have been commercial successes. For example, *After This Our Exile* (Fu Zi, 2006, dir. Patrick Tam Kar Ming), about a Malaysian Chinese family, is the Best Film Award winner at the 26th Hong Kong Film Awards, while the two Hong Kong submissions for the Academy Awards— *Exile* (Fang Zhu, 2005 dir. Johnnie To Kei-Fung) and *Prince of Tears* (Lei Wang Zi, 2009 dir. Yonfan) are set respectively in Macao and Taiwan.

On the one hand, these post-handover diaspora-themed films continue to affirm Hong Kong's status as “a prolific production center for Chinese diaspora culture” (Lo, 2005: 3). On the other, by being in different Chinese societies, these films have in a sense illustrated the diasporic Chineseness-es that Ien Ang (1998: 225) described as “to be Chinese in his own way” outside mainland China. Moreover, to some extent, they reflected Hong Kong filmmakers' general outlook on the notion of “China” as “one country” through their specific takes on these varied Chineseness-es.

According to the PRC's official definition of her “one country, two systems” policy, “one country” refers to the People's Republic of China, and Hong Kong, Macau, and even Taiwan should all belong to this “one country”. However, rather than following the official definition and the international *de jure* recognition of the PRC as China, this paper will examine Hong Kong cinema against a “China” in a broader sense — the notional concept of “Greater China” (Harding, 1993; Uhalley, 1994; Callahan, 2004). Moving away from the territory of mainland China, the scope of this paper will expand to other Chinese diasporas within the imagined “one country” of Greater China. Moving away from the territory of mainland China, the scope of this chapter will expand to other Chinese diasporas within the imagined “one country” of Greater China.

These peripheral Chinese societies include Macao, Taiwan and Southeast Asian Chinese communities in Singapore and Malaysia.

By examining the filmic representation of Macao and Taiwan in selected Hong Kong films, most of which made/released in the post-1997 era, I will address the notion of Chineseness in its plural form as associated with different Chinese societies. The purpose is to bring attention to illuminate the cosmopolitan side of Chineseness in Hong Kong cinema rather than the mere influence from the Mainland (PRC). I will argue that it is this pluralised, composite Chineseness reflected in Hong Kong cinema that has reinforced its very “Hong Kong-ness” against the impact from the “orthodox” Chineseness of the Mainland. Through a combination of textual and contextual analyses of selected Hong Kong diaspora films respectively set in Macao and Taiwan, this paper aims to provide a general understanding of the imbrications of various Chinese societies within Greater China and, most importantly, the changing role and position of Hong Kong (cinema) within this conceptual China as “one country” before and after it became a special part of the PRC.

How Does the “Chineseness” of Hong Kong Cinema Reinforce its Specificity?

With a border within the PRC to delimit Hong Kong as a Special Administration Region, the uniqueness of Hong Kong— or its specificity — is often emphasised or pursued as a parameter of how different Hong Kong is from the Mainland area in the PRC. From the stereotyped mainlander movie or television characters in the British Hong Kong era to the recent non-co-produced films targeting Hong Kong local market, these media productions are all indications of such attempts to accentuate the Hong

Kong specificity in its popular culture. However, with the economic development and further opening-up of the PRC, Hong Kong seems to be less distinct from mainland China than it used to be two or three decades ago. As Hong Kong scholar Kwai-Cheung Lo (2005:4) noted, “It would no longer be so easy to declare its so-called uniqueness to be in opposition to the Chineseness of (mainland) China.” In his book *Chinese Face/Off: the Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong*, Lo (2005: 4) argued that “If there is such a thing [as Hong Kong specificity], it operates according to the logic of a fantasy that affirms the ideological power of what it means to be Chinese, rather than any determinate local position.” Therefore, instead of arguing for the existence of “Hong Kong specificity,” which is defined by its “otherness” to the Chineseness of the Mainland, Lo (2005) examined the Chineseness of Hong Kong’s transnational culture so as to problematise “the contemporary *meanings* of being Chinese” [my emphasis] (p. 2) through Hong Kong culture.

The use of plurality in the expression “the contemporary *meanings* of being Chinese” [my emphasis] by Lo (2005: 2) echoes what Ien Ang (1998) called a “theoretical axiom that Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content... whose *meanings* are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora” [my emphasis]. As Ang (1998: 225) noted (as in prefatory quote for this chapter):

Being Chinese outside China cannot possibly mean the same thing as inside. It varies from place to place, molded by the local circumstances in different parts of the world where people of Chinese ancestry have settled and constructed new ways of living.

In this sense, due to the political division within Greater China, there are multiple

versions of “Chineseness” running in parallel in different Chinese societies, such as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. However, Lo did not simply repeat the de-centered pluralisation of Chineseness-es and apply it to Hong Kong culture. Instead, he asserted that “Hong Kong’s Chineseness is not one of the particular Chineseness-es to struggle with the origin [mainland China] by displacing it in its own specific ways” (Lo, 2005: 8), but “a site of performative contradictions” which “embodies the fundamental imbalance and inconsistency of the cultural totality of contemporary China” (Ibid: 4). By applying the term “inherent transgression” to Hong Kong’s Chineseness, Lo argued that under the “one country, two systems” arrangement, Hong Kong is:

the singular exception that enables one to formulate the totality as such [domain of Chineseness][Hong Kong’s Chineseness] can refer to an abstract wholeness that is implied by a singular element that is structurally displaced and out of joint. Within a given cultural totality, it is precisely that exceptional element that stands for that culture’s all-encompassing dimension.

(Lo, 2005: 8)

By emphasizing Hong Kong’s “exceptional-ness”, Lo’s argument for Hong Kong’s Chineseness has interestingly but convincingly reinforced the Hong Kong specificity which he had hedged in the first place. In the case of Hong Kong cinema, the diasporic films are typical examples of Hong Kong specificity embodied in its Chineseness of “an abstract wholeness” (Lo, 2005: 8) of China. By taking up the topics like local mafia-fights or casinos in Macao (*The Longest Nite*, *Exiled*, *Poker King*), the anti-communist “white terror” or the democratic presidential election in Taiwan (*Prince of Tears*, *Ballistic*), or juvenile delinquencies entangled with parent-child relationships in a

Chinese family located in Southeast Asia (*After this Our Exile, At the end of Daybreak*), these diaspora Hong Kong films are Chinese stories set outside Hong Kong itself or mainland China but belong to the conceptual “Greater China.” In this sense, rather than being based on the PRC state, the Chineseness of Hong Kong cinema can be seen as based on the idea of a Greater China. Therefore, instead of undermining its particularity, the Chineseness of Hong Kong cinema has reinforced its Hong Kong-ness as the exception to the PRC polity, although as the nexus of the Greater China.

According to Harding (1993: 660), the essence of Greater China refers to “the rapidly increasing interaction among Chinese societies around the world as the political and administrative barriers to their intercourse fall.” While Harding (1993: 661) explains the word “greater” as suggesting “a coherent economic and demographic region that spans administrative borders” as in “Greater London,” Uhalley (1994: 280) adds that the word “greater” might also “be seen to encompass and accommodate the reality of separation, whether it is temporary, partial, or permanent.” This chapter will interrogate in how the “coherent” yet “separated” Greater China is epitomised in the Chineseness of Hong Kong cinema through its diasporic films. By introducing the notion of Greater China as a bigger framework for “one country, two systems”, I will examine the different attitudes toward a coherent “one China” within this great entity.

First, with Hong Kong’s cinematic representations and comments, I will demonstrate how the casino city Macao has become the PRC’s role model for Taiwan because of its compliant attitude toward the Central Government, as well as its excellent economic performance since the reunification. Second, through two Hong Kong films respectively set in the Taiwan martial law era and more recent democratic era, I will illustrate Taiwan’s insistence on its different interpretation of China as the Republic of China

(ROC) rather than the internationally recognised PRC government. Last, I will introduce the nascent Chinese-language filmmaking in the two independent multi-ethnic countries — Singapore and Malaysia — through their respective connections with Hong Kong cinema. The examination of these connections will shed light on these Singaporean or Malaysian filmmakers’ “flexible affiliations” to the country “China” in a cultural sense. The overall purpose of this chapter is to bring awareness to the imbricate concept of “China” reflected in Hong Kong films: from the *de jure* PRC in mainland China to the unrecognised ROC government in Taiwan, which used to be the legitimate representative of China in the United Nations till 1971, and to the abstract notion of “Greater China” which spills into the jurisdictions of other independent countries such as Singapore and Malaysia.

1. Macao: An “Exemplary” Special Administration Region

“The vigor and vitality of the Macao SAR today are a vivid reflection of the strong life-force of the ‘one country, two systems’ principle.”

*Chief Executive of the Macao SAR Fernando Chui Sai On
At the inauguration Anniversary Celebration Gathering,
Third-Term Government Inauguration Held in Macao December 20, 2009
(as cited in Beijing Review, December 21, 2009)*

Two and half years after Hong Kong’s changeover, Macao became the second Special Administrative Region of the PRC on December 20, 1999. As one of only two SARs under the “one country, two systems” arrangement, Macao has received much less attention than Hong Kong. This is because Macao is much smaller and less developed economically than Hong Kong. However, since 2006, Macao has become the world’s

largest gambling city, with its gaming revenue surpassing that of Las Vegas in the U.S., and its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) has for the first time overtaken Hong Kong to rank as second in Asia (Vong, 2009; *The Economist*, 2010). Moreover, in 2009, Macao has passed a state security law generally known as “Article 23” which, according to BBC News, has proven itself “a more pliable region of China than Hong Kong” (BBC, 2009). The political pliability, as well as its strong economic competitiveness, has made Macao turn from a pre-handover “sin city” to an exemplary showcase of the PRC’s “one country, two systems” policy.

1.1 Portuguese Macao in Hong Kong Films

Due to its small size and population, Macao has never had a film industry of its own, nor has it become a targeted market of Hong Kong films like Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. However, since the 1950s, because of the geographical proximity and its majority Cantonese-speaking population, Macao has emerged as a convenient, if by no means important, locale in Hong Kong films. In the pre-handover Hong Kong cinema, the Macao element often appeared briefly in those crime and gangster films as a lawless haven for the fugitives from Hong Kong. As Hong Kong scholar Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009: 66) noted, “Notwithstanding its geographical and cultural affinity to Hong Kong, and despite its frequent appearance in Hong Kong films, Macau is rarely treated as a subject on its own.” During the first decade since the 1997 handover of Hong Kong, Macao suddenly became a more significant film setting for Hong Kong films. Although the Portuguese administration of Macao ended December 20, 1999, soon after Hong Kong’s changeover, colonial Macao in its final days has frequently re-appeared in post-1997 Hong Kong films. Almost all of the Macao-related Hong Kong films made during the first decade of the post-1997 era have chosen to tell their stories against the

background of the Portuguese-administered Macao facing its own handover countdown. In a sense, Portuguese Macao is used as the “doppelganger” of Hong Kong to transpose the nostalgic image of the former British colony, “when the nostalgic is no longer chic in one’s hometown” (V. Lee, 2009: 84). Moreover, besides projecting Hong Kong’s own sense of anxiety about the handover onto the Macao setting, in some of the films, as Hong Kong scholar Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009: 64) has noted, “Macau is not Hong Kong’s Other, but has a history of its own that is equally perplexing and *scriptable* (original emphasis).”

Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009) did a comparative case study of two Hong Kong films that “take its (ex-)colonial neighbour seriously as an entity in itself” (p.69)— *Fu Bo* (2003, literally: Cantonese euphemism for “mortuary attendant”) and *Isabella* (2006). The former takes up the theme of death through three interconnected stories about an old mortuary attendant, a death row prisoner who had killed an old man’s son, and a Portuguese prison chef who cooks the last supper for the prisoner. The latter, *Isabella*, is about realizing the meaning of life through a story of a teenage daughter reuniting with her father who had never been aware of her existence before she showed up out of nowhere. In both films, the protagonists’ personal experiences and the epiphanies of their life and death are intertwined with the pending social change on the eve of Macao’s handover. Therefore, Vivian P.Y. Lee (2009: 67) argues that the narrative of both films had revealed a certain “existential crisis” and it was this crisis that had forged “a kind of kinship between Macau and Hong Kong in the two cities’ post-colonial present.” In other words, the post-handover Hong Kong cinema has started to take Macao more seriously as a film subject, rather than as an exotic element, because besides their geo-cultural proximity, the only two Special Administrative Regions of the PRC are now even more closely connected by their sociopolitical similarity brought by

their respective “re-unifications” with the PRC. This presumed kinship is based on the two regions’ common marginalised positions and confused post-colonial identities of being simultaneously within and without the homeland after the “reunification.”

In this sense, the role of Hong Kong and Macao’s homeland “China”, both in the strict sense of the PRC on mainland China, and in the broader sense of “Greater China”, is essential in order better to understand the two regions’ “kinship” forged by their common post-handover “existential crisis” (V. Lee. 2009: 67). The two sullen Macao stories, *Fu Bo* and *Isabella*, have chosen to show a philosophical attitude toward this “existential crisis.” However, a series of the Macao triad-themed films made by Hong Kong-based independent film production company *Milkyway Image* have otherwise boldly enunciated more social and political criticism on the 1997 handover through audacious metaphors referring to the interrelationship between Hong Kong, Macao and the Mainland. The almost ubiquitous metaphors in these films have invited various interpretations and made “*Milkyway Image*” a prominent and distinctive brand name in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema (Pang, 2002b; Pun, 2006; Teo, 2007).

Co-founded in 1996 by Hong Kong film director and producer Johnnie To Kei-Fung and his frequent co-director Wai Ka-Fai, *Milkyway Image* started at the time when the Hong Kong film industry was in a desperate situation, fearful of losing its overseas markets in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the whole city was very anxious in its anticipation of the 1997 handover. Differing from the self-Hollywoodisation trend through elaborating the CGI effects mentioned in the previous chapter, the newly-established *Milkyway Image* had chosen to make small-budget films focusing on the local market and reflecting local concerns. It impressed the Hong Kong film industry with its first production *Too Many Ways to Be Number One* (*Yi Ge Zi Tou De Dan*

Sheng, 1997), “a self-consciously nonconformist” and “thematically somewhat heavyhanded” film, as David Bordwell (2000: 269) put it. This somewhat experimental film has adapted a two-scenario structure similar to the German film *Lola Rennt* (a.k.a. *Run Lola Run*, 1998, dir. Tom Tykwer). The storyline restarts in each of the scenarios as the protagonist makes a different life-determining choice and therefore receives an alternative ending. *Too Many Ways to Be Number One* begins with a Hong Kong local hooligan being told by a palm-reader that he has to leave Hong Kong to avoid a misfortune. He flees first to mainland China in the first scenario and then, in the second, to Taiwan.

Since the protagonist is first killed in his Mainland China adventure and then crippled in the restart scenario in Taiwan, *Too Many Ways To Be Number One* is generally read as a political allegory to imply that “Hong Kong’s future lies neither with China nor with Taiwan” (Bordwell, 2000: 269). Given the fact that the film was first released in March 1997, less than four months before the Hong Kong handover in July 1, Bordwell’s association of the film and the political changeover of Hong Kong seems well-grounded. However, Hong Kong scholar Laikwan Pang (2002b: 329) dismisses this political interpretation and also reasonably argues that “its China/Taiwan choice carries no real meaning...what the film reveals is a philosophical exploration of individuals’ freedom of choice.” This argument holds water when we examine *Too Many Ways To Be Number One* individually as a film with an experimental touch. However, when examined together with some other *Milkyway Image* productions, such as *The Longest Nite* (1998), *Election 2* (2006) and *Exiled* (2006), the film *Too Many Ways To Be Number One*, “is implicitly and explicitly concerned with the question of “Greater China” and Hong Kong’s place in this greater entity” as Stephen Teo (2007: 202) pointed out. These films are either set entirely in Macao or move between Hong Kong,

Macao and the Mainland to allude to the complicated and sensitive relationships between these regions.

Among these films, *The Longest Nite* (1998) and *Exiled* (2006) are two prominent political allegories set in a disorderly Portuguese Macao on the eve of the regime change. On the one hand, the background of both films is a realistic portrayal of the uncontrolled gang violence since the mid-1990s, and hit its peak in the last two years before the 1999 Macao handover. On the other, the gang wars and conspiracies depicted in these two films are basically fictional stories based on the filmmakers' political views and attitudes.



Figure 6.1-2 Movie posters for *The Longest Nite* (1998) and *Exiled* (2006), both Hong Kong-made gangster films set in pre-handover Macao

Violent crime in Macao had become a serious problem during the last few years in the 20th century leading up to its sovereignty transfer. From 1996 to 1999, the number of murders, shootings and even car bombs had surged. The victims ranged from the Portuguese high officials (including the Head of the Macao government's Gambling Inspectorate Ant3nio Apolin3rio, and Judiciary Police chief Ant3nio Marques Baptista)

to local civilians and innocent foreign tourists. These crimes were seen as “a deliberate, taunting provocation of the authorities” (Clayton, 2009: 69), and were generally assumed to be triad-related. The attempted murder of Antonio Marques Baptista in May 1998 had resulted in the prompt arrest of the alleged head of the largest Macao triad society Wan Kuok-koi (a.k.a. “Broken Tooth Koi”). In fact, Wan Kuok-Koi’s arrest was only a few days before the May 6, 1998 premier of *Casino* (1998), a Hong Kong gangster film based on his life story and largely financed by Wan himself. The fierce applause that the film received in Hong Kong may not be regarded as an indication of the Hong Kong audience’s admiration of the gangster Broken Tooth personally, nor their desire to “rebel against the vestiges of colonial law and order” as David Bordwell (2000: 37) has stated. However, it has definitely demonstrated the popularity of the gangster story (genre) among the local audience and their interests in the social order issues in Macao.

In such a dramatic context, *Milkyway Image* has made several Macao triad-related films since its founding in 1997. However, instead of the realistic depiction of the real-life gang wars in Macao, *Milkyway Image*, under the leadership of its producer/director Johnnie To Kei-Fung and Wai Ka-Fai, has chosen to convey subtle political criticism through the fictional gangster stories. *The Longest Nite* (*An Hua*, literally: *Dark Flower*, Cantonese slang for “secret bounty of the triad”), unfolds its plot around a rumor about one triad offering a secret bounty to murder the leader of its opposing triad. A corrupt policeman is assigned by the first triad to stop the spreading of the rumor and to prevent the event which could result in absolute mayhem among the triad societies. By the end of the film, the rumor about the assassination turns out to be a conspiracy by a senior triad boss, Mr. Hung, to eradicate the disobedient members of the gang before his scheduled return to Macao after decades of absence. As previously discussed in Chapter

Three, the surname “Hung” of the returning big boss is the homonym of “Red” in Chinese, his image as the insidious puppet master behind the whole gang warfare is generally associated with the Communist Party of China, although Johnnie To Kei-Fung personally denied any serious message in the film (Teo, 2007: 92). Regardless, the tragic ending of the triad-serving policeman has clearly demonstrated the motif of a dark fatalism which has occurred in many *Milkyway Image* productions (Pang, 2002; Pun, 2006; Teo, 2007). “There is the near-religious devotion to fatalism that marks To’s action films,” as Teo (2007: 92) noted. The frustration of being in a powerless position to accept the power/regime transfer arrangement is revealed through a character in *The Longest Nite* saying, “we are like bouncing balls; it isn’t up to us to choose where to go or when to stop.”

Eight years later the film *Exiled* (2006) is again set in 1998 Portuguese Macao and is about gang warfare. Movie fans have even matched all the characters in the film with the different political forces in Hong Kong and Macao according to their respective personalities and interrelationships, such as the Hong Kong SAR government, the Macao SAR government, the Hong Kong Pan-democracy camp, etc. The PRC central government, again in this film, is presumably represented by a tyrant-like triad boss. This interesting match-up is in all probability over-interpretation. However, the motif of fatalism and the political allusions are beyond doubt. In *The Longest Nite* the fatalism in the protagonist’s powerlessness was expressed by self-ridicule (depicting himself as a bouncing ball). In *Exiled*, however, the fatalism is conveyed through the disorientation of the protagonists as they repeatedly asked each other “Where to go?”, and constantly decided their actions by flipping a coin. After a blood-soaked gang war, the protagonists start their journey of exile driving a red car with an oil leak. The striking car number plate “MF 97-99” (as mentioned in Chapter Three, see Figure 3.8) clearly

indicates that this is a story about the handovers of Hong Kong and Macao and the breakdown of the car seemingly alludes to the economic downturn or even the stalled democratic process in the Hong Kong SAR, as it is not this problem that afflicts the Macao SAR.



Figure 6.3-4 Stills from *Exiled* (2006): The fatalistic coin-flipping and the broken-down car with the plate “MF97-99”

In fact, having been economically overshadowed by Hong Kong for decades, Macao has witnessed high speed economic growth in its post-handover era largely because of the preferential policy of the PRC with Macao SAR overtaking Hong Kong in *per capita* GDP in 2006 as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Coincidentally, it was also the year when *Isabella* and *Exiled* — the two Hong Kong films specifically set in Portuguese Macao— were released. After these two films, it seems that the dismal, disorderly colonial Macao has disappeared in Hong Kong films. Instead, a post-handover Macao SAR is portrayed as a prosperous, exciting gaming resort of the PRC, as in the light-hearted love stories of *Look for a Star* (*You Long Xi Feng*, 2009, dir. Andrew Lau Wai-Keung of *Infernal Affairs*) and *Poker King* (*Pu Ke Wang*, 2009). Both of the casino-themed films were publicly screened in Mainland China with official permission in the year 2009 to commemorate the ten years anniversary of Macao’s reunification.

1.2 Macao SAR: the Gaming Resort of the PRC

The gaming industry is usually used as an umbrella term for casino gambling, horse or greyhound racing, and lotteries. However, in the PRC the word “gaming” (*Bo Cai*) is primarily used as a euphemism for gambling (*Du Bo*) when praising the spectacular achievement of the “casino economy” in Macao SAR. As a socialist country, gambling is strictly prohibited in the PRC while in neighboring Hong Kong, casinos are also illegal and the only legal form of gambling is horse racing run by the Jockey Club. Early in the 1980s, the expression “dancing and horse-racing will continue” was frequently quoted from the PRC cadres as a promise to allow Hong Kong people to maintain their capitalist life style under the “one country, two systems.” The casino business in Macao has also been unaffected by the transfer of sovereignty.

Gambling has been legalised in Macao by Portuguese administration since 1847 as a means to compensate the revenue loss in trading caused by the establishment of Hong Kong as a British colony in 1842 (Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau Macao SAR, 2011). The Portuguese had built their settlement in Macao as early as the 16th century, but it was not until the late 19th century that Macao had officially become a colony of Portugal. In the wake of the 1842 Nanjing Treaty, which turned Hong Kong into a British colony, Portugal signed the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Amity and Commerce (a.k.a. Treaty of Peking) with the governing Chinese authority (the Qing Dynasty at the time) in 1887. The sovereignty of Macao was officially ceded to Portugal until the handover on December 20, 1999, again following the precedent of Hong Kong’s handover in July 1, 1997. As Hong Kong had become the major trading port between China and Europe since the Opium War (1839-42), Macao had long been overshadowed by Hong Kong’s economic status. Also, due to its lack of natural

resources, Macao has had to engage in illegal *coolie* trafficking (Yun, 2008) as well as legalised gambling activities to support its local economy. Therefore, Macao had become known worldwide as the “Monte Carlo of the East” or, sometimes, the “Casablanca of the East” and as “a decadent ‘city of sin’” (Porter, 1993).

Surprisingly, Macao’s gambling business boomed after it reunited with the PRC. According to the Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau Macao SAR (2011), more than 70 per cent of the Macao SAR’s total fiscal revenue in 2009 was generated from the gaming tax. This number was approximately 30 per cent for several decades before the handover (W. M. Lam, 2010). Generally speaking, there are two major causes that have led to the rapid development of Macao’s casino economy — the ending of the monopoly on casino industry in 2002 by Macao SAR, and the implementation of the Individual Visit Scheme since July 2003 by the PRC central government. The *Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau* (STDM) enjoyed the monopoly rights to all gambling business in Macao since 1962. When the STDM’s monopoly license expired, in 2002 the new SAR government granted six new casino operating concessions to other gaming companies, including those world famous companies from Las Vegas such as Wynn, Sands, Galaxy, Venetian and MGM. Since then, the number of casinos in Macao increased from 11 in 2002 to 21 in 2006 (McGowan, 2008), and as of May 2011, a total of 33 casinos is in operation according to official statistics (Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau Macao SAR, 2011).

Apart from the ending of the monopoly system in the gambling business, the casino economy boom in Macao can largely be attributed to the PRC’s introduction of the Individual Visit Scheme in 2003, which allows Mainland residents to travel to Hong Kong and Macao on an individual basis. This scheme is intended to boost the tourism of

Hong Kong and Macao which had suffered greatly from the 2003 SARS epidemic. This scheme has provided a steady flow of visitors from mainland China to Macao and thus fueled the rapid expansion of Macao's casino business. By allowing the residents from the socialist Mainland to engage in the gambling activities in Macao, the Central Government reveals an attitude of *acquiescence* to Macao's status as the special gaming resort of the PRC. More importantly, the relaxed traveling policy demonstrates the Central Government's generous support for Macao's economic prosperity in an effort to build it into a positive showcase of the "one country, two systems" formula.

In the context of the booming casino economy of Macao and the burgeoning film market in the Mainland, the agile Hong Kong filmmakers soon set aside the gloominess about the "existential crisis" or political allusions (as in aforementioned *Isabella* and *Exiled*). They started to make financially rewarding films about Macao specially tailored for the Mainland market. In July 2008, seven months after the opening of MGM Grand Paradise in Macao, Hong Kong Media Asia Films started to shoot its biggest production of that year – *Look for a Star* at this spectacular resort casino. This is a romantic comedy about a young billionaire and a female dancer who works as a part-time dealer at his casino. This modern version Cinderella story is said to be adapted from the real relationship between the Macao's "Casino King" Stanley Ho and his fourth wife. Ho is the founder of STDM who had monopolised Macao casino business for four decades until 2002 and still the owner of nearly half of the casinos in Macao as of the year 2011.

Released for the movie season of Valentine's Day and the Chinese New Year in 2009, *Look for a Star* was a box-office hit with revenue of 113 million RMB (about US\$17.65 million) on the strength of the budget of less than 40 million RMB (about US\$ 6.25

million) (Media Asia website, 2011). Such a handsome reward should mainly be ascribed to the soaring development of the Mainland film market as a whole. Since the commercialisation reform of the film industry in 2002, the annual box office is increasing at an average rate of about 25 per cent every year. In the year 2009 alone, the increase was 40 percent and the total revenue had reached a new record of 62 billion RMB (about US\$938 million) (Institute for Cultural Industries, Peking University, 2012: 3).



Figure 6.5 DVD cover of *Look for a Star* (2009)

A modern Cinderella story takes place in a Macao casino

Being a co-produced film catering to the Mainland market, *Look for a Star* succeeded in weakening its casino theme but highlighting the tourist attractions in Macao. In fact, this film was officially supported by the Macao Government Tourist Office and works perfectly as a tourism promotion film for Macao by presenting both the splendid brand new resort casino, MGM Grand, and the historic Portuguese architecture, such as the Old Ladies' House inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO, the Guia Lighthouse and the Coloane village.

This “scenic film” strategy may be seen as from the tradition of eroticizing Macao in Hong Kong films from the 1950’s. In 1959, the Cantonese romance *The Missing Cinderella* (*Jin Zhi Yu Ye*, 1959, dir. Ng Wui), remade from the 1953 classic *Roman Holidays* starring Audrey Hepburn, was shot in Macao to tell a love story between a journalist and a young woman who fled from her rich family in Hong Kong. The local landmarks such as The Ruins of St. Paul’s Cathedral and San Man Lo (a.k.a. Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro) were featured in the film to represent the Portuguese-administered Macao as a fascinating colonial town, an exotic holiday resort for rich people from Hong Kong. Half a century later, the love story continues to be repeated in different ways, but only the targeted audience has changed to the mainland residents who have recently been granted rights to travel to Macao on an individual basis.

In terms of film style, *Look for a Star*, though co-produced with the Mainland, is still a continuation of the Hong Kong urban romance from its golden times in the 1980s. However, *Poker King*, another Macao casino-themed Hong Kong film in 2009 is obviously a deviation from the Hong Kong action gambling genre tradition. This genre has become very popular in Hong Kong since the early 1980s. It reached its full bloom by the end of 1980s with the famous *God of Gamblers* (1989, starring Chow Yun-fat), with over ten sequels and spin-offs throughout the 1990s. As the Hong Kong filmmakers started to make films for the Mainland market, the gambling genre has disappeared from the scene for quite a while. Taking advantage of the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Macao’s handover, *Poker King*, as a Hong Kong film with a major gambling element, was officially screened in Mainland movie theaters.

However, despite the word “poker” in the movie title, the whole movie does not elaborate on the dazzling magic-like gambling skills as it used to do in the 1990s.

Instead, it focuses on the robust casino economy of Macao through relatively insignificant commercial wars between several casino runners and their ambitions of building more entertainment facilities in Macao to attract tourists worldwide. While *Look for the Star* promotes itself by claiming to be loosely adapted from “Casino King” Stanley Ho’s love story, *Poker King* has even cast the celebrity Josie Ho Chiu-Yi, daughter of Stanley Ho, in the role of a casino CEO.



Figure 6.6 Still from *Poker King* (2009): actress Josie Ho Chiu-Yi, daughter of Macao casino magnate Stanley Ho



Figure 6.7-8 Stills from *Poker King* (2009): Planning for New Gambling Resort City

From the dark, violent colonial Macao in *The Longest Nite* (1998) to the vigorously developing Macao SAR in *Poker King* (2009) — about a decade — the evolution of Macao’s image through Hong Kong films has in a way reflected the process of how it has become “a diligent child of China’s socialist capitalism in the twenty-first century” (V. Lee, 2009: 72). Moreover, it helps explain the 2009 easy passage of state security law to fulfill Basic Law Article 23 in Macao, while the legislation of the same law has resulted in Hong Kong’s 2003 July 1 protest and has been shelved indefinitely since then. As a Macao legislator pointed out, “When the Portuguese left Macau, people were

hoping for a change and saw that change [in] Beijing. In Hong Kong people feared change” (Bezlova, 2009: n.pag.).

On the issue of the anti-treason law — Article 23 — Macao has set a role model of prioritizing “one country” (the PRC state) over “two systems” for Hong Kong. Meanwhile, its spectacular economic performance based on the gambling industry, which is officially prohibited in the socialist Mainland, has to certain extent illustrated how the “two systems” practice works. In this sense, to the PRC central government, Macao serves as an exemplary demonstration of the “one country, two systems” arrangement to persuade Taiwan with a case for reunification. However, Taiwan rejects the proposal not because of the doubt about its feasibility, but on the ground that it, holds that the “one country” in “one country, two systems” should be the Republic of China which was founded in 1912 and retreated to Taiwan in 1949 the founding of the PRC on mainland China.

2. Taiwan: “One China, Different Interpretations”

The expression “One China, Different Interpretations” is also known as “the 1992 Consensus,” although it is more like a mutual understanding in a strict sense as there are still different views about defining “China.” The so-called consensus is used to describe the outcome of a meeting held in Hong Kong in 1992 between two semi-official organisations from both sides of the Strait — the mainland China-based Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) and the ROC-based Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF). At the meeting, both sides have agreed on the “One China principle” that both mainland China and Taiwan belong to one sovereign country – China as “a historical, geographical, cultural and racial entity” (from *The White Paper: Relations*

Across the Taiwan Strait published by the ROC government on Taiwan in 1994, as cited from Cabestan, 1996: 1263). However, there is an irreconcilable conflict in the definition of “China” – both the PRC on the Mainland and the ROC on Taiwan claim to be the sole legitimate representative of Chinese sovereignty. This insistence on a “one China principle” and the difference in their respective interpretations of “one China” across the Taiwan Strait have been captured in three post-1997 Hong Kong films on major Taiwan political issues, *Black Gold* (*Hei Jin*, 1997), *Ballistic* (*Dan Dao*, 2008) and *Prince of Tears* (*Lei Wang Zi*, 2009). Moreover, though limited in number, these three films have sufficiently demonstrated Hong Kong’s connection to, and concern with, Taiwan as a Chinese territory, and in a way, revealed Hong Kong’s own stand on the complicated problem of the divided sovereignty of China.

2.1 *Prince of Tears*: 1950s “White Terror” in Taiwan under Martial Law

Produced by Hong Kong film director/producer Fruit Chan and directed by Hong Kong director Yonfan, *Prince of Tears* (2009) tells a tragic story set in 1950s’ Taiwan clouded by anti-communist “white terror.” Because of its sensitive topic, it is impossible for *Prince of Tears* to be screened at the mainland Chinese theatres. Thus, the promotion of this film has adopted a strategy of using the international film festival circuit as its springboard for the international audience as an art house movie. Following the precedent of the Taiwanese movie *A City of Sadness* (1989, dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien) about the Taiwan 2-28 massacre in 1947 and which is the first Chinese-language film to win the Golden Lion award at the Venice Film Festival, *Prince of Tears* premiered in competition at the 66th Venice Film Festival in 2009 as a Hong Kong-Taiwan co-production. Later, it was chosen as Hong Kong’s entry for the foreign-language category of the 82nd Academy Awards, which resulted in the denouncement of the film’s

status as a Taiwanese domestic film. Therefore, its US\$ 306,000 subsidy from Taiwan's Government Information Office was taken back (Shackleton, 2009). Although the film failed to win any prizes at the festivals, it has become prominent as one of the very few films to touch on the politically sensitive topic of Taiwan under martial law.

Taiwan was ceded to Japan in 1895 by the last Chinese feudal dynasty, Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). After fifty years of being a Japanese colony, Taiwan was returned by Japan to the Republic of China in 1945. Four years later in 1949, the ROC under the governing Chinese Nationalist Party, the *Kuomintang (KMT)*, withdrew from mainland China to Taiwan after the Chinese civil war. The above-mentioned 2-28 Massacre of 1947, in which thousands were killed or imprisoned, was an outbreak of accumulated tension between the local inhabitants of Taiwan and the newly arrived KMT administration. In the aftermath of the incident, the KMT government declared martial law in Taiwan in 1948 which has remained in effect for four decades until 1987. The award-winning *A City of Sadness (Bei Qing Cheng Shi, 1989, dir. Hou Hsiao-hsien)* was the first film to take up the once political taboo of "the 2-28 Massacre" as its subject after martial law was repealed.

While *A City of Sadness* recalls the traumatic memory of the local inhabitants of Taiwan under the KMT government, *Prince of Tears* represents the life of the KMT military officers during the first several years after retreating to Taiwan. The plot unfolds through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl whose happy family is torn apart when her father, a KMT Air Force officer, is prosecuted and then executed for communist espionage. The story is set in 1954 in a KMT military dependents' village (*juan cun*) — the provisional housing for KMT soldiers and their dependents from mainland China. In fact, a great many Taiwanese celebrities have grown up in these

military dependents' villages, including the leading Taiwanese filmmakers Ang Lee, Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward Yang De-chang. These supposedly temporary villages have actually ended up as permanent settlements, as the KMT had never realised its goal of resuming its governance on Chinese mainland. In the film, the old KMT General refused to have his garden tended in the hope of returning to the Mainland within a couple of years. However, the frustration of this unrealised hope is illustrated through a sorrowful scene later in the film when the General orders his soldiers to clean up the desolate garden, saying "It seems we are not going back soon."

While *A City of Sadness* has focused on the national identity confusion of the Taiwanese local inhabitants during the years of Taiwan's transfer from fifty years of colonisation by Japan to the authoritarian governing of the KMT-led ROC government, *Prince of Tears* has brought the attention to the plight of the exiled ROC government. In order to create an authentic feeling of the 1950s' Taiwan, the prologue of *Prince of Tears* employed the standard government propaganda newsreel from that particular era. This film clip features the 1950s ROC government radio propaganda about the progress of construction in Taiwan and the political slogan of "*counter-attack and regaining control over Chinese mainland*" (*fan gong da lu*).

The most conspicuous image is a black-and-white map of China marked with the four Chinese characters "*Zhong Hua Min Guo*", (the Republic of China) with a subtitle consisting of lyrics from the National Anthem of the ROC. The territory of a "unified China" includes not only Taiwan and mainland China, but also Mongolia, which used to be ruled by China during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), and then the ROC founded in 1911. However, Mongolia had unilaterally declared secession from the ROC in 1924 under the influence of the former Soviet Union. The independence of Mongolia has

been recognised by the newly founded communist PRC since 1949, “presumably under pressure from the Soviet Union” (Harding, 1993: 679) but never by the ROC regime. However, the ROC government in the 1950s, though having retreated to Taiwan, insisted on its own conception of China which included Taiwan, Mainland China and all of Siberia and much of Soviet Central Asia, as the map from the film clip shows. In fact, such maps of “the Republic of China” were printed in high school textbooks in 1950s Taiwan (Harding, 1993), demonstrating the ROC government’s commitment to the territorial integrity of China, though this was slightly different from the PRC government’s version.



Figure 6.9: Still from *Prince of Tears* (2009): A map of the Republic of China
Shown in the Newsreels of 1950s’ Taiwan

However, since the ROC lost its United Nation seat of “China” to the PRC in 1971, the major concern of the KMT administration of the ROC is no longer to regain control of the Mainland, but how to retain its alternative interpretation of China under pressure from both the PRC’s reunification under “one country, two systems” proposal, and the local Democratic Progress Party’s (DPP) “Taiwan independence” movement. During the 1990s, the ruling KMT party was facing severe criticism with political corruption and gangster involvement (known as “black gold”, *Hei Jin*). This has led to a split of

factions within the KMT and then resulted in the KMT's defeat by the pro-independence DPP in the three-way presidential election in 2000, marking the end of the KMT's one-party ruling of the ROC (Taiwan). In the 2004 election, the reunited KMT was defeated by the DPP again by a very narrow margin after the "3-19 Shooting Incident", an attempted assassination of Chen Shuibian— the DPP leader, Taiwan President (in office 2000-2008) — the day before the election, which was widely suspected to be staged as a strategic maneuver to support the DPP's campaign. However, during his second term of presidency, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP was involved in a series of scandals, which led to an anti-Chen Shuibian campaign in 2006. Soon after his presidency ended in 2008 and the KMT took office again, Chen was eventually convicted and imprisoned for bribery and corruption. Since the democratisation of Taiwan, the dramatic political evolution of Taiwan over the last two decades is condensed in two post-1997 Hong Kong films, *Black Gold* (1997) and *Ballistic* (2008). Through the two films, Hong Kong filmmakers have demonstrated their deep concern for Taiwan as an entity within what could be termed "Greater China."

2.2 *Black Gold* and *Ballistic*: Political Corruption and the 2004 Election Farce in Democratic Taiwan

Strictly speaking, *Black Gold* (alternative English title: *Island of Greed*, 1997) is not a post-1997 Hong Kong film. Although it was released in December 1997 after the handover, the production of *Black Gold* had started in 1996, the year when cross-Strait tension mounted after Beijing conducted a missile test near Taiwan's coastline before Taiwan's first direct presidential election — "the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis" (Bush, 2005: 210) . The story is set in 1995 as an actual Taiwanese television news report on Beijing negotiator Tang Shubei's visit to Taiwan, which is used at the beginning of the

film to provide the background to the story. As indicated in the film title, the story is the disclosure of Taiwan's "black gold politics" in the mid-1990's as the Taiwanese mafia – "black gangs" (*Hei Bang*) – infiltrated the political domain, while the corrupt politicians accumulated money through their connections to the gangsters. The main plot follows a government agent in the Ministry of Justice investigating a gang-leader-turned-politician over the course of the Taipei legislative election campaign.

As a Taiwan-themed political thriller from the perspective of Hong Kong filmmakers, *Black Gold* is not a story of intrigue behind a struggle for political power, but is filled with spectacular Hong Kong-styled action scenes, gun-battles, etc. Based on the stereotyped characterisation of the upright inspector and the unscrupulous gang leader (both played by Hong Kong film stars), the film revealed an obvious anti-Taiwan-independence political leaning. It explicitly compares the corrupt antagonist in the film to the pro-independence Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui (in office 1988-2000) by candidly displaying Lee's picture along with the gang leader's wife proudly commenting on how much her husband and the President look alike. On the other hand, the brief appearance of the Minister of Justice is obviously based on the real figure of Ma Ying-jeou (the present Taiwan President since 2008), who had launched an effective anti-corruption campaign and major gang-sweep operations while he was in the post of the Minister of Justice from 1993 to 1996 (when the film is set).

Unlike the Taiwan-born Lee Teng-hui, who is an advocate for the Taiwanese Localisation movement, Hong Kong-born Ma Ying-jeou, whose father had moved from mainland China to Taiwan in 1949 as a high-ranked KMT officer, is a supporter of "One China, Different interpretations." Taiwan President, Ma Ying-jeou has called for the terms "the mainland" or "the other side of the strait" to refer to the PRC, rather than

using “China”, as he believes, according to the ROC Constitution, that mainland China is also part of ROC territory (W. Fu, 2011).

In fact, while condemning the political corruption in Taiwan, *Black Gold* expresses genuine concerns about the ROC under the KMT administration. Through the words of the protagonist:

Corruption had caused our defeat in the civil war and we were forced to retreat to Taiwan. Now they are again messing up this beautiful island. If they collapsed Taiwan, where else can we retreat to? One step behind is only the ocean.

To some extent, this criticism did soon come true. As noted earlier, about two years after *Black Gold* was released, the KMT party was defeated by the DPP in the 2000 Taiwan presidential election and again in 2004, marking the end of its five decades of one-party dominance in Taiwan. With the change of administration from the KMT to the DPP, Taiwan has also experienced great changes which reflect the conflict between the camps of Taiwan independence and “One China.”

In the film *Black Gold*, there is a long shot of the ROC national flag raising ceremony in front of the Memorial Hall, followed by the close-up of the inscription *Da Zhong Zhi Zheng* on the main gate of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Park. Unexpectedly, these scenes have become a precious record of Taiwanese history, as the inscription has since been removed and replaced in 2007 during the DPP administration (2000-2008) as part of the “de-*Chiang*-ification” effort to contain the influence of the KMT.



Figure 6.10 Still from *Black Gold* (1997): the ROC national flag raising ceremony in front of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall



Figure 6.11 Still from *Black Gold* (1997): Close-up of the inscription *Da Zhong Zhi Zheng* (“Great, Central, Perfect, Upright”)

During the “de-*Chiang*-ification” campaign, in the name of eliminating the cult of the personal worship about Chiang Kai-shek, the former ROC president and KMT party leader, his picture was removed from the new Taiwan currency in 2000. Moreover, the Chiang Kai-shek International Airport, opened in 1970s, was renamed Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport. Most of the streets, buildings, schools, and organisations named “Chungcheng” (an alternative name of Chiang Kai-shek) were also renamed. The National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall was changed into “National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall”, while the inscription *Da Zhong Zhi Zheng* (meaning “Great, Central, Perfect, Upright”, the ancient Chinese phrase from which Chiang Kai-

shek's other name originated) was replaced with *Zi You Guang Chang*, (“Liberty Square”) from 2007.

Although after Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT was elected to the presidency in 2008, the name “National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall” was restored soon after. However, the new inscription “Liberty Square” was retained. Beside its appearance in the above-mentioned film *Black Gold* (1997), the last time the original “*Da Zhong Zhi Zheng*” plaque appeared in a Hong Kong film is in *Ballistic* (2008), a political thriller based on the controversial “3-19 Shooting Incident” before the 2004 Taiwan presidential election.



Figure 6.12 Still from *Ballistic* (2008):

People rallied near the *Da Zhong Zhi Zheng* Gate in 2004 demanding the truth about the “3-19 Shooting Incident” of Taiwan presidential election

The “3-19 Shooting Incident”, also known as the “3-19 Presidential Assassination Attempt”, took place on March 19, 2004, one day before Taiwan’s presidential election. The DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian, who was running for his second term of the presidency, survived a gunshot wound to his abdomen while he was campaigning in Tainan, a southern city of Taiwan, with his vice president. The shooting incident won Chen Shui-bian decisive sympathy in the election and the next day he was re-elected as

President by very narrow margin. Rallies and protests continued for weeks challenging the election result and demanding the truth about the so-called “assassination attempt.” Although the official investigation on the shooting was closed in 2005 without a convincing conclusion, there continued to be suspicions about the incident being staged and faked.

The Hong Kong film *Ballistic* simulates the 3-19 Shooting Incident based on speculation about Chen Shui-bian faking of the incident. Starting with the police investigation on a seemingly irrelevant case on the illegal possession of firearms, *Ballistic* simulates the “3-19 Shooting Incident” without using real names. It boldly depicts a political fraud about a presidential candidate masterminding an assassination attempt of his vice-president in order to blame his opponent, and then faking a gun wound on the candidate himself when the vice-president survived the assassination due to a half-filled bullet. The film ends in an anti-corruption demonstration two years after the election, which is based on the real event of the “Besiege the Presidential Office” demonstration – the climax of the 2006 “Million Voices against Corruption, President Chen Must Go” campaign (Parfitt, 2007: 201). The campaign has in a way led to Chen Shui-bian’s charges and conviction of bribery and corruption immediately after his presidential term finished in 2008.

Since in real life the investigation of the “3-19 Shooting Incident” has been inconclusive, the supposition in *Ballistic* therefore is taken as a probable explanation of the “cold case.” More important than disclosing the truth, this Hong Kong film actually is a demonstration of an anti-DPP posture, which to some extent, is equivalent to anti-Taiwan independence. This political standing is consistent with the PRC’s uncompromising position on the Taiwan issue, and thus has gained the film access to

the Mainland.

Ballistic was released in Hong Kong in November 2008, six months after Chen Shui-bian stepped down and Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT was sworn into office as President in May 2008. Later in January 2009, it was screened in a limited number of cities in Taiwan, under an alternative Chinese title *Jiang Hu Qing* (literally: *Affection of the Grassroots Community*) to reduce its political sensitivity. However, it was not until April 2010 that *Ballistic* was released on the Mainland, more than one year after its scheduled release date, due to censorship regulations. While the film was indeed unsuccessful in terms of its box office revenue in Hong Kong and Taiwan, it was generally received positively in the Mainland because of the rarity of the political thriller genre there.

Considering the sensitive subject of the film, *Ballistics* was finally accepted by the Mainland censors presumably under the influence of two events. First, the aforementioned conviction of Chen Shui-bian; in September 2009, Chen Shui-bian received a life sentence (later reduced to twenty years) for embezzlement, money-laundering and bribery. The legal results of Chen's corruption have made *Ballistic* appear to be less politically biased than otherwise would be the case. Second and more importantly, is the unprecedented development of cross-strait relationships during the Ma Ying-jeou administration in Taiwan since 2008. *Ballistics* was screened on the Mainland while Taiwan and the PRC were in the final stage of negotiation of an epoch-breaking bilateral trade agreement—the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (“ECFA”)—following similar examples of the PRC's agreements with Hong Kong and Macao, (the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement or “CEPA” signed in 2003). ECFA was signed in June 2010 and took effect in September that year.

Although Taiwan disapproves of the “one country, two systems” model practised in the Hong Kong and Macao SARs on the ground of the asymmetric central-SAR power configuration, it did not reject the economic integration as part of “Greater China” under “One China, Different Integrations.” As for Hong Kong, despite the local debate about whether the priority of “one country” has undermined “two systems” and Hong Kong’s high degree of autonomy, it shares the PRC’s anti-Taiwan independence stance. This is not only because of the fear that Taiwan independence would threaten the security of the Taiwan Straits, but more because of Hong Kong people’s residual affection towards the ROC. Historically speaking, the ROC is the first Republic regime of China after the 1911 Revolution ended the 4,000 years monarchy. Although it had lost control of mainland China since 1949 the founding of the communist PRC, as aforementioned, the ROC has been the legitimate representation of China at the United Nations till 1971. In fact, many Hong Kong residents or their parents have moved out of the Mainland to avoid the Communist rule. Even until the 1990s, to some of these Hong Kong people, the ROC is the more legitimate representation of China, rather than the PRC.

In fact, Hong Kong’s affection towards the unrecognised ROC and its neutral stand towards the “two Chinas” can be perfectly illustrated in the 1990 Hong Kong comedy *Her Fatal Ways*. The film tells a story about a female Mainland police officer on a mission in Hong Kong. In this film, the Mainland communist was portrayed as the uncouth alien while the KMT veteran of the ROC was introduced as the father of a Royal Hong Kong police officer. In a breakfast table scene at the Hong Kong police officer’s home, the triangular relationship among Hong Kong and the “two Chinas” is shown as the Mainland communist and the veteran KMT are both in their respective military uniforms to challenge each other, while the Hong Kong police officer, in his

own uniform, sits between them trying to mediate. As the two are arguing about using the chopsticks with left or right hand (a metaphor for the leftist and rightist ideologies), the Hong Kong policeman takes up knife and fork in each hand and says “I am adept with both hands.” A noteworthy detail in this scene is that in the background, the portraits of all four presidents of the KMT party (also the ROC) are hanging on the wall of the Royal Hong Kong police officer’s home.



Figure 6.13 Still from *Her Fatal Ways* (1990) the breakfast table scene: the Hong Kong police officer (middle) his father, a veteran KMT military officer (left), and the communist cadre from Mainland China (right).

In fact, since the 1950s, Hong Kong films have been enjoying preferential access to the Taiwan market as domestic products despite Hong Kong’s status as a British colony and a SAR of the PRC. Since the 2004 implementation of the CEPA, the PRC has also granted domestic status to Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions and waived the import quota on non-co-produced Hong Kong films. In this sense, Hong Kong films are technically being treated as domestic products in both Mainland China and Taiwan, as both the PRC and the ROC government hold to the “one China” principle and Hong Kong as part of China. Therefore, regarding the Taiwan issue, Hong Kong may not be a supporter of “reunification” which, to a certain extent, means Taiwan’s capitulation to the PRC. However, Hong Kong has demonstrated a clear posture against Taiwan

independence through its films. Unlike the political implication of the PRC's "reunification", Hong Kong's anti-secession stance is more out of belief in ethnic Chinese kinship. Made up of the Chinese cultural and "blood tie", this kinship transcends the political discrepancies and territorial delimitations across the Taiwan Strait and serves the basis of the national "Great China." Even for Southeast Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia, where the term "Chinese national sovereignty" or "Chinese reunification" do not apply, the shared cultural roots and blood lineage have sustained their transnational connections with Hong Kong cinema. Through their cooperation with Hong Kong cinema, the Chinese diaspora communities' "flexible affiliations" to the common Chinese culture are also illuminated.

3. Singapore and Malaysia: One Chinese Culture, Flexible Affiliations

Although both are independent sovereign states, Singapore and Malaysia are inextricably connected to Chinese culture through their considerable populations of Chinese ancestry. The Chinese communities in these countries have always been an important overseas market for Hong Kong films, and in the last decade became more actively involved in the production of Hong Kong cinema. This involvement can partially be attributed to the revival of Singapore feature film production since the 1990s after a halt of almost two decades (Uhde & Uhde, 2006), and the emergence of the Malaysian Chinese cinema "Mahua cinema" since the late 1990s (Raju, 2008). While the focus on its Chinese community among the resurgent Singaporean films is "in tune with the Republic's population profile" (Uhde & Uhde, 2006: 77), Raju (2008) argues that the Chinese films made in Malaysia are "[g]oing against the homogeneous notion of Malayness and Malaysianness as advocated by the state since the early 1970s" (p.77) to serve as "a newer vehicle of free expression and identity formation for

Chinese Malaysians” (p.72). In either case, the Chinese-language filmmaking in both Singapore and Malaysia are flexibly affiliated to the common Chinese culture through their own ways, just as Aihwa Ong (1999: 6) employed the phrase “flexible citizenship” to refer to how subjects “respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions” in the era of globalisation. In Singapore and Malaysia Chinese cinemas, their flexible affiliations to Chinese culture are deeply intertwined with the Hong Kong film industry, the hub of Chinese-language film production.

3.1 From Malay to Chinese Language: Renascent Hong Kong-Singaporean Films

Hong Kong’s involvement in the Singapore film industry can be dated back to the 1930s, and throughout the golden age from the late 1940s to early 1960s through Hong Kong media mogul Sir Run Run Shaw (originally from Shanghai). Shaw and his brothers started their film business in Southeast Asia in 1924, with the establishment of the Shaw Organisation (later renamed as *the Shaw Brothers Ltd*) in Singapore. The Shaw Organisation succeeded in building up a film distribution circuit in the Singapore-Malaya region for the Chinese-language films made by Shaw’s film studios in Shanghai and Hong Kong. In the 1930s, Shaw moved his Shanghai studio to British Hong Kong to merge into a bigger studio with a new name called Nanyang (“South Ocean”, referring to Singapore-Malaya) to focus on the mainly Cantonese-speaking Southeast Asia Chinese market, and to take advantage of the British colonial network. As Poshek Fu (2008: 3) noted, the Shaw Brothers’ transnational linkage of film business among British Hong Kong, mainland China and Southeast Asia “exemplified the cosmopolitan and boundary-crossing businesses culture of diasporic Chinese capitalists” and “privileged pragmatism, family connections and flexibility of capital formation.”

Besides the importation of Chinese-language films to the Strait Settlements, Shaw Brothers also expanded to Malay film production since the late 1930s in an effort at localizing its business in the Singapore-Malay region (Barnard, 2008; Yung, 2008). From the late 1940s to late 1960s, about 150 Malay-language films were produced by Shaw Brothers' Singapore-based Malay Film Production (MFP) studio; and totally more than 250 Malay films were made in Singapore during the two decades from the late 1940s to late 1960s, including those made by the competing Cathay Keris run by Kuala Lumpur-born Chinese businessman Loke Wan Thp (Barnard, 2008: 170). In this golden age of Singaporean cinema its film production mainly reflected the Malay community and "the Chinese face of Singapore was conspicuously absent from the local films" (Uhde & Uhde, 2006: 72), although the major studios were both sponsored by Chinese entrepreneurs. Establishing a vertically integrated studio system, the Hong Kong-based Shaw Brothers had dominated the Singapore film industry through distributing their own Hong Kong-produced, Chinese-language films for the Chinese community and Singapore-produced, Malay-language films for Malay, Indian and other ethnic groups.

However, the growing Malay nationalist feelings among the Malay community in Singapore and the racial conflicts between the ethnic Chinese and the Malays had often led to harsh criticism on Shaw Brothers' Malay-language films for not reflecting the real concern of the Malays. Shaw Brothers' Malay Film Production studio in Singapore was finally closed down in 1965, as a result of its leading figure, Malay director P. Ramlee's departure to Kuala Lumpur in the previous year (Uhde & Uhde, 2006: 73; Barnard, 2008: 159). In 1967 to 1968, the last three Shaw Brothers Malay-language films were made in Hong Kong instead of Singapore (Barnard, 2008).

With the shutdown of Shaw Brothers Malay Film Production (MFP) studio in Singapore, film production there soon came to a complete halt in 1970s. For the following two decades, the local film market had been filled with imported Hong Kong and Hollywood films until a recent revival of Singaporean films in 1990s as noted earlier. As a country with a population consisting of about three-quarters ethnic Chinese, the reascent Singapore films focus mainly on the local Chinese population, and the common Chinese cultural background serves as the basis of the prevalent co-productions with Hong Kong film industry.

Due to the limitation of its domestic market with a population of about only four million, and more seriously, the lack of filmmaking personnel after the two decades' inactivity in this field (Uhde & Uhde, 2006), co-production with other countries/regions has been advocated as an important development strategy for Singapore film industry. Taking MediaCorp Raintree Pictures, the pioneering filmmaking company in Singapore, as an example, since its founding in August 1998, more than half of the films it produced are co-productions with Malaysia, Australia, or New Zealand, and most frequently, with Hong Kong. In the past decade or so, MediaCorp Raintree has made approximately thirty films, and more than one third of them were co-produced with Hong Kong film companies since MediaCorp Raintree's second feature film *The Truth About Jane and Sam (Zhen Xin Hua)*, made in 1999 directed by acclaimed Hong Kong director Derek Yee Tung-Sing.

From the perspective of the Hong Kong film industry, as I have mentioned in previous chapter, it was facing great challenge from Hollywood's expansion in Asian markets since the mid 1990s, and has lost most of its share in Southeast Asian countries after the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. Therefore, Hong Kong cinema can retain its influence in

Singapore market through co-producing with the local film industry. For example, the first Hong Kong-MediaCorp Raintree co-produced film *The Truth About Jane and Sam* (1999) was a rare Hong Kong hit film in Singapore that year with a box office of S\$1,058,000 (about US\$819,519) (Singapore Film Commission, 2011). Considering the declining appeal of Hong Kong film in Singapore market since the mid 1990s, this rare outcome has been generally attributed to the casting of Singaporean actress Fann Woon Fong in the lead role. For her role in this film as a problem teenager, Fann was nominated Best New Performer Award for the 19th Hong Kong Film Award, although she was already a well-known television actress in Singapore.

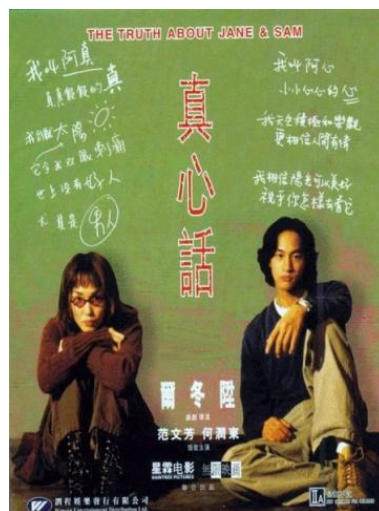


Figure 6.14 Movie poster of *The Truth about Jane & Sam* (1999)
the first Singapore MediaCorp Raintree and Hong Kong co-production

Except for the Singaporean actress, the Singaporean element in the film *The Truth About Jane and Sam*, as in most of the other Hong Kong-Singapore co-productions, is almost negligible, if not totally obliterated. Although the film revolves around a journalist coming from Singapore to work in Hong Kong, it is actually about the relationship between Hong Kong and the Mainland, as the well-educated, rich journalist falls in love with his interviewee, a poor and unsophisticated young girl who migrated

to Hong Kong from the Mainland. While he leads her to a healthy and optimistic life, he also learns to understand poverty, and the hardship of life. This clichéd romance echoes the confused and depressed mentality in post-1997 Hong Kong under the impact of both the handover and the Financial Crisis.

In fact, the filmography of these Singapore-Hong Kong co-productions has to some extent reflected the trajectory of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema struggling to retain its own identity while the trend of integration with the mainland Chinese cinema is becoming overwhelming. Again taking MediaCorp Raintree as an example, its co-production with Hong Kong started with the low-budget urban romance *The Truth About Jane and Sam* in 1999. The blockbuster action film *2000 AD* (2000) about international computer system security involving not only the Hong Kong and Singapore Police Force, but also the US CIA is a quintessential example of Hong Kong cinema's self-Hollywoodisation trend around 2000. The ghost-themed supernatural thriller *The Eye* (2002), which had been remade in Hollywood with the same title in 2008, is the most successful case of Hong Kong producer/director Peter Chan Ho-sun's pan-Asia production strategy. However, in the post-CEPA era when Hong Kong film industry is shifting its focus onto the Mainland, Singapore has become a smaller partner in the co-production as Mainland China joined in. With the remarkable box office achievements of the Mainland-Hong Kong-Singapore co-productions *Protégé* (2007) and *Painted Skin* (2008), Singapore signed an Official Film Co-production Agreement with the P.R. China in July 2010 (Singapore Media Development Authority website, 2011). According to this agreement, the Singapore-China co-produced films will be considered as national productions in both countries, which enable the fledging Singapore cinema to access the Mainland market more easily, just like the CEPA has guaranteed access for Hong Kong films and the EFCA for Taiwan films. Through this

official trans-regional film co-production, the different Chinese cinemas from Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China are actually building up a generalised pan-Chinese cinema for the Greater China market. Besides these four Chinese cinemas, there is another smaller but not negligible overseas Chinese cinema — the Malaysian Chinese cinema. Because of its Hong Kong associations, the Chinese-language films set/made in Malaysia are also indispensable to an all-around understanding of the imbricated Chineseness of Hong Kong cinema.

3.2 Malaysian Chinese Cinema in the Context of Support by Hong Kong

Malay-born Chinese filmmakers' contribution to Chinese-language cinema as a whole is apparent through the names of Tsai Ming-liang (Taiwan-based director), Michelle Yeoh Choo-Kheng (Hong Kong-based actress) and Angelica Lee Sin-Jie (Hong Kong and Taiwan-based actress). However, the Chinese-language filmmaking in Malaysia has emerged only recently among the Malaysian independent filmmaking movement since 2000 (Khou, 2004), and soon garnered attention and support from Hong Kong.

Unlike Singapore where about three-quarters of its total population is ethnic Chinese and the Chinese language is as one of its official languages, in Malaysia ethnic Chinese people only make up about one quarter of the total population and the only official language is Malay. Since only films with more than 60 per cent Malay dialogue can be counted as Malaysian domestic film, Malaysian Chinese cinema has been regarded as double-marginalised as neither Malaysian cinema nor authentic Chinese cinema. Raju (2008: 72) has classified the Malaysian Chinese cinema (*Mahua* cinema) as a “transnational Chinese cinema” and argued that the emergence of Chinese-language independent cinema in Malaysia's state-controlled media environment is “a means of

expression for the Malaysian Chinese” in their “search for a suitable identity.” Although small in scale, the Malaysian Chinese cinema has caught attention internationally, especially from the Hong Kong film industry, which is the nexus of all Chinese cinemas from different regions and is also in desperate need of fresh blood to rejuvenate itself.

In 2005, Hong Kong Focus Films Ltd. initiated a project named “FOCUS: First Cuts” (*Ya Zhou Xin Xing Dao*, literally. Asian New Star Directors) involving seven young filmmakers from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia to produce six feature films on HD camera, and the Malaysia-born filmmaker Ho Yu-Hang was selected in this project. As a pioneer figure of Malaysian Chinese cinema movement, Ho had made two feature films before entering the project. As the one of the most outstanding outcomes of this FOCUS project, Ho Yu-Hang’s film *Rain Dogs* (*Tai Yang Yu*, 2006) was nominated for competition in the Orizzonti (Horizons) section of the 63rd Venice International Film Festival as a Hong Kong- Malaysia co-production. Like other Malaysian Chinese filmmakers, Ho focuses on the Chinese communities in locales of contemporary Malaysia and tells stories about, as Raju (2008: 73) noted, “interpersonal relationships, especially about betrayal and separation among Chinese protagonists in various Malaysian locales.” *Rain Dogs* is a film about self-discovery through a high school graduate’s journey of looking for his missing half-brother from modern cities to remote villages in Malaysia.

After the success of *Rain Dogs*, in 2007 Ho was awarded USD\$250,000 from the Asian Cinema Fund at the Pusan International Film Festival in Korea, for his new script *At the End of Daybreak* (*Xin Mo*, literally: Heart Demon). The story is adapted from a real crime in Taiwan about a young man who murdered his under-aged girlfriend at his over-protective mother’s instigation, as the girl’s parents threatened to sue him for rape. As a

social tragedy which could happen anywhere in the world, Ho adapted the story into the setting of Malaysia to portray the life in the Malaysian Chinese community.

Thematically, *At the End of Daybreak* is quite similar to another Malaysia-set Hong Kong film *After This Our Exile* (*Fu Zi*, literally: Father and Son, 2006), which is also about a twisted parent-child relationship, as the gambler father used his eight-year-old son to steal money. *After This Our Exile* is directed by Hong Kong director Patrick Tam Kar-Ming, the leading figure of the late 1970s to early 1980s Hong Kong New Wave and the mentor of the internationally-acclaimed Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-wai. Patrick Tam moved to Malaysia in 1995 and taught filmmaking there for five years before he came back to teach at Hong Kong City University. As his returning work, *After This Our Exile* swept the 26th Hong Kong Film Awards in 2007, winning Best Film, Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best Supporting Actor (the ten-year old Gouw Ian Iskandar who plays the role of the son).

The winning of *After This Our Exile* at the 2007 HKFA is important to the Hong Kong film industry not only because of the return of the Hong Kong film veteran Patrick Tam, but also because of its diasporic Chinese theme, which differentiates this film from other Hong Kong-mainland China co-productions. As mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, with the theme “Pass on the experience, Look northward to the Mainland”, the 2007 HKFA is overwhelmed by the flourishing trend of Hong Kong-Mainland co-production as both the Best Actress and Supporting Actress Awards were taken by Mainland actresses through their roles in the co-productions. However, compared to other extravagant costume dramas set in ancient China such as *Curse of the Golden Flowers* and *The Banquet* (respective winners of the Best Actress and Best Supporting Actress Awards), the realistic *After This Our Exile*, about the Chinese in Malaysia, is still regarded as more “Hong Kong” (that is less “mainland China”) in its theme and

aesthetic style, although it is also co-produced with the Mainland. It is interesting to see how the intersection of the nostalgia for the past glory of Hong Kong cinema (through the returning veteran Patrick Tam), the diasporic setting outside both Hong Kong and Mainland China, and the general “Mainlandisation” trend which “titillates” the emphasis on Hong Kong specificity among the local industry, contributed to the sweeping success of this Malaysia-set Hong Kong film at the HKFA.

Just as *After This Our Exile* was popular with the HKFA, the Hong Kong-Malaysia-Korea co-produced *At the End of Daybreak* was also welcomed by Hong Kong film critics. The Hong Kong actress Kara Hui Ying-Hung, who played the role of the mother in this film, was awarded the Best Actress Award at the 29th HKFA in 2010. This is her second win as she also won this award at the first HKFA back in 1982. Considering that the mother role in *After This Our Exile* is arguably the female lead, and that Kara Hui has also been awarded the Best Supporting Actress at the Taiwan Golden Horse Awards for the same role, her winning of Best Actress Award at HKFA may be seen as more out of the nostalgia for Hong Kong cinema’s glorious past than for the role itself.



Figure 6.14-15 Movie Posters of *After this Our Exile* (2006) (left) & *At the end of Daybreak* (2009)
Two Hong Kong-Malaysia films on a twisted parent-child relationship

The success of these Malaysia-Hong Kong films at film festivals home and abroad has brought to attention the Malaysian-Chinese cinema in which an “imagined geopolitical space” marked as “Chinese Malaysia” (Raju, 2008: 77) is portrayed. Being excluded by the Malaysian mainstream cinema, the Malaysian Chinese cinema has to some extent been involved in pan-Chinese cinema through their cooperation with Hong Kong cinema. Be it government-supported, marginalised, or privately-funded, the minor Chinese cinemas in Singapore and Malaysia are both affiliated to the one common Chinese culture. Through the linkages of Hong Kong cinema, they are becoming the new force in the building of a border-crossing Chinese-language cinema of the conceptual Greater China.

Conclusion:

This chapter is about Hong Kong’s filmic representation of other Chinese societies outside the Mainland, including Macao, Taiwan, and Chinese communities in Singapore and Malaysia. Instead of simply equating “China” with the nation-state of the PRC as defined in the “one country, two systems” policy, I have drawn on the abstract concept of “Greater China” to redefine the Chineseness of Hong Kong cinema. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, Callahan (2004: xxi) argued that “Greater China is the product of a contingent network of relations in local, national, regional, global, and transnational space” and suggests a way of seeing Greater China as “heterotopias” which are “not the clean or pure norms of the social constructivists, they are multiple, and thus involved in struggle and politics” (p.22). If the ultimate goal of “one country, two systems” policy — a politically unified China under the regime of the PRC — may sounds like a utopia/dystopia, Callahan’s heuristic use of the Foucaudian term “heterotopias” is helpful in understanding the complexity and contingency of Greater

China.

With the increased economic integrations among Mainland China and other Chinese societies such as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, these multiple “heterotopias” of Greater China are actually visualised through the images of the Chinese diasporas in Hong Kong films: from the dark, disorderly colonial Macao to prosperous and pliant Macao SAR; from the anti-Communist Taiwan under martial law to the democratised Taiwan holding up an alternative interpretation of “one China”, and from the government-promoted Chinese language film industry in Singapore to independent Chinese filmmaking of the minority ethnic Chinese in Malaysia. By examining the various Chineseness-es outside mainland China through the post-1997 Hong Kong films, I argue that Hong Kong’s uniqueness lies in its composite/cosmopolitan Chineseness. At the nexus of the separated Chinese diasporic communities, Hong Kong cinema is actually demonstrating a broader concern for an abstract “China” transcending the political national boundary of the PRC.

Besides Hong Kong cinema’s concern for “Greater China”, other Chinese-language cinemas are also turning their attention to Mainland China—the largest Chinese film market. With the impressive development of the Mainland film market, the Hong Kong-Mainland co-production mode has gradually been accepted by Chinese filmmakers all over the world as a convenient and lucrative means to access this promising market. More and more Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions have begun to involve more complicated flows of transnational finance capital and personnel among the whole Greater China (such as Taiwanese and Singaporean), and sometimes even the countries within the Chinese cultural sphere in East Asia (namely, Japan and Korea). Under this new multilateral co-production mode, it would be not quite adequate to describe the co-

production trend as just the “Mainlandisation” of Hong Kong cinema. With their participation, many Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced films should better be categorised as pan-Chinese films. Generally speaking, these pan-Chinese productions are mostly high-budget, spectacular martial art films set in ancient China, which is the common historical reference point shared by all Chinese societies, as well as the societies influenced by ancient Chinese culture. In the following chapter, I will focus on Hong Kong’s brand name genre, the martial arts film, to look into the rising pan-Chinese filmmaking led by Hong Kong cinema. The more significant purpose of discussing this fusion of different Chinese cinemas is to gain an understanding of “Chinese reunification”— the ultimate political goal of “one country, two systems” policy.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

In this thesis based on a combination of film and cultural studies, I have examined the 14-year (1997-2011) development of Hong Kong cinema under the “one country, two systems” policy. As I have discussed in the Introduction, this study has two primary aims: to understand Hong Kong cinema as a social, cultural and economic institution under the influence and impact of the political policy of “one country, two systems”; and in turn, to understand the “one country, two systems” policy/transitional era/historical-cultural conjuncture through the production and reception of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. In this concluding chapter, I will summarise the key findings of my study, and explain my approach in handling the two research questions. Finally, I will summarise the significance of this study and propose prospects for future studies.

1. How is Hong Kong Cinema Influenced by the Policies?

In order to answer my first research question I have adopted mainly a combination of historical and industrial approaches. The former “concerns how sociopolitical or cultural events effect film production and reception” (Zhang, 2002: 93), while the latter “concerns the institutions and operations of the film industry” (ibid: 95). In my thesis, I have identified and analysed the major phenomena and general trends of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. I have constantly connected the industrial conditions, film awards results and box office performance to the notable social political events and changes, such as Taiwan’s lifting of martial law in 1987; the PRC’s adaptation of a market economy in the early 1990s; the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis; the 1999 establishment

of the unprecedented Hong Kong Film Fund by the local government; China's 2001 entry to the WTO; the 2002 marketisation reform of the PRC film industry establishing a cinema line system and allowing private capital into the field; and the oft-mentioned, most influential event for Hong Kong cinema – the 2004 implementation of the CEPA.

In addition to the historical and industrial approaches in providing a general picture of the situation of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, I have also embedded detailed textual analysis in the general contextual inquiry throughout my thesis. As for certain selected cinematic texts, I elaborated on their thematic motifs or technical, aesthetic and structural elements so as to specify their positions in certain trends. These include *A Man Called Hero* (1999) role in introducing CGI to martial arts films discussed in Chapter Five; *My Dream Girl* (2003) discussed in Chapter Four, as the first New Foreign-Market Film in the co-production trend; *Fearless* (2006) and *Ip Man* (2008) discussed in Chapter Seven as anti-imperialist nationalist *kung fu* films. I also justified their significance for the general development of Hong Kong cinema/pan-Chinese cinema, as exemplified by films such as *Election I & II* (2005) discussed in Chapter Three, and *Exiled* (2006) discussed in Chapter Six. These films were all by Johnnie To Kei-fung through his *Milkyway Image*, as the flag-bearer of Hong Kong cinema. *Painted Skin* (2008) and *A Chinese Fairy Tale* (2011) were also addressed in Chapter Seven as examples of the nascent Chinese “ghost-free” fantasy genre.

Attention has also been paid to the influence and impact on the film industry by competing new media through a cross-media research perspective. I have examined the double-edged relationship between new media and the film industry in relation to the issue of piracy and censorship, especially, how VCD/DVD and the Internet damaged the film industry due to rampant product piracy, and how they can help the dissemination of certain films which could not be released theatrically due to heavy censorship (Chapter Three). Moreover, the changing habits of film-viewing as a result of the development of small screen media have also led to the high-budget spectacular blockbuster mode of filmmaking (Chapter Five and Seven). Finally, the role of online

ratings in affecting moviegoers' decision and, eventually, the box office performance of the films was also briefly mentioned (Chapter Eight).

Through these varied but inter-connected approaches within cinema studies, I have delineated the general trajectory of Hong Kong cinema since 1997, analysing different perspectives such as market access, cast composition, production strategies, and thematic choices. As a reminder of what I have discussed in the thesis, what follows is a brief chronological summary of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. In what could be described as a bleak scenario, as early as two years prior to the political changeover when a local newspaper had declared the demise of Hong Kong cinema, an exaggerated and premature response to declining industry conditions after its most prosperous time during 1992-1993 (Lie, 2007). Then the unexpected Asian Financial Crisis befell Hong Kong, right after the seemingly smooth transfer of sovereignty. The once prosperous export-oriented commercial Hong Kong cinema, without any support from the government, continued to deteriorate in the first few years after 1997 — mainly as a result of Asian Financial Crisis affecting Hong Kong cinema's traditional Taiwanese and Southeast Asian markets, rather than as a result of the change of political regime. While many Hong Kong residents were suffering from “negative equity” caused by the breakdown of the Hong Kong property market and many felt demoralised (as depicted in *Victim* (1999) discussed in Chapter Five), the local film industry has ambitiously adopted an internationalisation strategy with limited capital and market share. However, the initial attempt to emulate Hollywood by enhancing CGI special effects in the production, and imitating its globally-accepted high-concept in the plotline, has not saved the industry from declining.

At the turn of the new century, while some filmmakers were insisting on local productions as an expression of their opinion about the political changeover (Johnnie To Kei-fung & his *Milkyway Image*), some were engaging in a newly initiated pan-Asian model (Peter Chan Ho-sun & his *Applause Film*). There still some who were struggling with censorship and the resulting alternative versions for the newly-claimed

Mainland Chinese market. The implementation of the CEPA in 2004 started the era of Hong Kong-PRC co-production, in which Mainland actresses have become symbolic of this production model, and indicative of the reversed economic power relationship between the two regions. Due to the thriving Hong Kong-Mainland coproduction model, in the post-CEPA period a small number of Hong Kong filmmakers started to re-emphasise the Hong Kong local market in the name of retaining Hong Kong cultural identity. These filmmakers have deliberately eschewed the PRC market through seeking direct financial subsidy from the local government or by resorting to “sex and/or violence-packed” Category III local stories. Meanwhile, the overwhelming trend of Hong Kong-PRC co-production is evolving into a deterritorialised, pan-Chinese cinema as a result of the expanding Mainland audience market attracting other Chinese cinemas such as those from Taiwan and Singapore. Consequently, Hong Kong, the SAR which is both inside and outside the PRC, and the former Chinese-language filmmaking hub, is now taking on the role of a connector of different Chinese cinemas and the facilitator of the pan-Chinese production model. As I have covered only the films from 1997 to the first half of 2011, the question of the future direction of both pan-Chinese and Hong Kong cinema will need to await the next generation of films.

My original purpose for doing this doctoral research grew out of a concern to understand the complexity and contingency of “one country, two systems” conjuncture. This was an issue of cultural analysis grounded by a corpus of films that demanded a focus on the cultural contexts within which they were produced and consumed. Therefore, in my account of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, I have been mindful throughout the thesis to maintain an outsider’s point of view about Hong Kong cinema — that is to say, to develop a cultural studies methodology as a contextualisation of film practices. For example, in Chapter Three in the “one movie, two versions” phenomenon, I have avoided the “Hong Kong cinema-as-victim” narrative by demonstrating the multiple versions tradition in Hong Kong and in other cinemas, the politically provocative “Category E” ideas of Hong Kong cinema and the eventual

self-censorship of Hong Kong filmmakers for the purpose of competing for revenue with pirated copies.

However, in contrast to my outsider's point of view, to the insiders — the Hong Kong local scholars — the quest for Hong Kong identity through its cinema has naturally been prioritised in their works. Laikwan Pang (2010) explicitly expressed her disappointment with, and expectation of, Hong Kong cinema through the title of her Chinese book *Sunset Not Yet: Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema*. In this book, Pang has also adopted a cultural studies approach, but her focus and emphasis remain on Hong Kong cinema's local identity, and anxieties about losing that identity. As Pang (2010b: 164; my translation) noted:

Shrouded by the pan-Chinese, Asian, and global mentalities, Hong Kong cinema is behaving in an affected manner and trying to look smooth and slick by catering to the needs of all sides. Meanwhile, it is also striving to manufacture a seemingly pure Hong Kong cultural identity.

This incisive criticism of the Hong Kong cinema, in fact, may serve as a perfect summary of the 14 years of performance of Hong Kong cinema in the “one country, two systems” era. Commercially, Hong Kong cinema has lost its traditional Southeast Asian market, but has gained a larger and expanding Mainland market thanks to the “domestic” status brought about by the CEPA — the crucial policy document that has accelerated the regional economic integration under the framework of “one country.” In fact, the similar document that the ECFA signed between the PRC and the ROC (Taiwan) five years after the CEPA in 2010 could also be seen as an agreement based on the “one China” policy, although the two parties hold very different interpretations of it (as I have discussed in Chapter Six). Moreover, the signing of the ECFA is indeed an achievement of the “one country, two systems” policy by setting Hong Kong and Macao as the role models for Taiwan. However, unlike the “exemplary” Macao, Hong Kong's rejection of the anti-treason law, Article 23, has aggravated the tension between

“two systems” differences and “one country” commonality. Hong Kong cinema personnels and scholars’ obsession with Hong Kong identity/specificity is the quintessential illustration of their efforts to prioritise “two systems” (as discussed in Chapter Five). This consideration has guided how I have answered my second research question of understanding

2. “One Country, Two Systems” Reflected in Hong Kong Cinema

As a comment as well as a prophetic statement of the “one country, two systems” practice in Hong Kong, the late Nobel prize-winning neo-classical economist Milton Friedman (2006: n.pag.) once argued, “The ultimate fate of China depends, I believe, on whether it continues to move in Hong Kong’s direction faster than Hong Kong moves in China’s.” Milton Friedman’s comment on the dynamics of China (PRC)-Hong Kong relations is concerned with economic freedom. However, it has reflected the same discourse-referential ambiguity of the “one country, two systems” formulation which inspired this study in the first place. As I have explained in the Introduction, my primary goal for the study is to change the mindset of equating China with the PRC, and counterposing Hong Kong and the PRC as unfettered capitalism and strict socialism in understanding the “one country, two systems” conjuncture.

Throughout my thesis, I have been very cautious about using the word “China.” This is because the notion of “China”, in my study, is imbricated with territorial, sovereign, political, and cultural meanings of mainland China/the PRC, Taiwan/the ROC, the Greater China, and “cultural China” — the overlapping concepts that I have expounded on throughout the analysis of Hong Kong cinema (particularly in Chapter Six and Seven). Moreover, I have also been careful in applying the word “socialist” to the PRC/Mainland. This is for two reasons. First, it is problematic to define the “socialism” of the PRC today, as it has officially adopted a market economy for almost two decades. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, the PRC has undergone substantial economic-related ideological changes, such as adopting a market economy and

protecting private property with several amendments to the PRC Constitution. The present “socialism” on the Mainland is by no mean the same as that of three decades ago, when the “one country, two systems” policy was formulated. To make sense of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” was another factor which motivated me to conduct this study, besides challenging the notion of equating “China” with the PRC.

Therefore, in the few instances I have used the word “socialist,” I have mostly used it as a PRC self-proclaimed attribute rather than as an imposed derogatory judgment. This “socialist” attribute of the PRC would be emphasised or highlighted as an explanation or excuse when mentioning the prohibition of gambling on the Mainland (Chapter Five), or censorship on film subjects like treason, extra-marital relationships (Chapter Three), and strict banning of superstition such as karma (Chapter Three) and ghosts (Chapter Five and Eight) on the Mainland silver screens. My intention was to present evidence to challenge traditional and stagnant view of the PRC as Leninist “socialist” and to encourage reflective observation of the present “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

Second, in seeking to unravel the co-existence of “two systems,” I was cautious about using the word “socialist” to avoid slipping into reductionist stereotyping. In fact, Milton Friedman (2006: n.pag.) had referred to Britain — the world’s oldest capitalist country — as “socialist” in comparison to Hong Kong:

Though a colony of socialist Britain, Hong Kong followed a *laissez-faire* capitalist policy, thanks largely to a British civil servant, John Cowperthwaite.[Cowperthwaite] was so famously *laissez-faire* that he refused to collect economic statistics for fear this would only give government officials an excuse for more meddling. His successor, Sir Philip Haddon-Cave, coined the term “positive non-interventionism” to describe Cowperthwaite’s approach.

If the *laissez-faire* policy or “positive non-interventionism” is the defining factor of capitalism, then according to Milton Friedman’s criterion, Hong Kong had also turned “socialist” when the SAR government bought shares from the stock market to help Hong Kong survive the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis. Moreover, as I noted in Chapter Five, the preference that the PRC granted Hong Kong cinema through the CEPA, the Hong Kong SAR government’s establishment of the Film Development Fund (FDF) in 1999, and the injection of HK\$300 million to it as the direct subsidy for local filmmaking in 2007, are all telling examples of Hong Kong cinema’s moving away from the *laissez-faire* policy.

Therefore, through my cautiousness in using the two ambiguous and contentious words – “China” and “socialist” – I have first emptied the PRC pre-defined meaning of “one country, two systems” as “Mainland socialism vs. Hong Kong capitalism” within the PRC state, and then started my exploration by taking the policy as “a void concept and its content [is] shaped by the shifting balance of forces interacting at each historical juncture or moment” (Wong, 2004: 2 – quoted in the Introduction). I have demonstrated the divergence and collaboration, (the “two versions” phenomenon and co-production); conflict and compromise (not-for-PRC films and pan-Chinese cinema) between the “two systems,” and explored the layers of meaning of China as “one country” in different contexts (the PRC, the ROC, the Greater China, and “cultural China”) through the platform of Hong Kong cinema in respect to its production and reception.

I have chosen Hong Kong cinema as my “site” for this cultural studies-oriented work first because the Hong Kong film industry has made, and is still struggling to make, a significant contribution to the city-state’s brand-building and its quest for a distinct cultural identity. More importantly, the primary reason lies in that the Hong Kong cinema/film industry, as a social, economic and cultural institution, can provide a perfect “site” – “the point of intersection and of negotiation of radically different kinds of determination and semiosis” (Frow & Morris, 2000: 395) – rather than “a social

totality” or “total social phenomenon” (ibid) for studying this “one country, two systems” era/conjuncture.

Through the close examination of Hong Kong cinema’s early “two versions” tactic (Chapter Three) to present pan-Chinese strategy (Chapter Seven), its northbound keenness (Chapter Four) and local preservation (Chapter Five), and its incontestable status as a connector of Chinese diasporas (Chapter Six), I have illustrated not only the dynamics between the “two systems,” but also the difficulty of balancing the “one country” commonality and “two systems” specificity (Chapter Five).

However, in the process of interrogating the alternative meaning(s) of the “one country, two systems” policy, what I have been trying to avoid is to provide any new definition or denotation of the notions of either “systems” or “country.” As I have indicated in the Introduction, the primary aim of this study was to capture the complexity and contingency of the “one country, two systems” policy/era, so “inducing conjunctural questioning, rather than in providing positivist answers to set questions” (Ang, 2005: 483).

In summary, I have conducted a close examination of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema with the purpose of understanding the complex and contingent “one country two systems” policy/era as a historical-cultural conjuncture. This study is intended to achieve more than a contribution to the future studies of Hong Kong and Chinese-language cinema(s), and also of other “national” cinemas through its conjunctural analysis approach rooted in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies. It aims to illuminate important aspects of the social, cultural and political constitution of contemporary China and the Asia-Pacific Region. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, the clear political ambition of the “one country, one system” policy is to create a “Grand Unity” under the rule of the PRC. The present practice of the “two systems” arrangement is only a transitional expediency. Whether or not the goal will be achieved, and what the ending will turn out to be, depends crucially on the future

policies of the PRC. Taking into account the PRC's currently passive, if not totally negative approach towards full democracy in Hong Kong, and refusal to exclude the use of military force as an option in resolving the Taiwan issue, the future prospect of the "one country, two systems" policy is full of uncertainties. In this respect, my study at this stage will serve as a timely marker for the first 14 years practice of this policy and as a springboard for future studies on the issues of/related to Hong Kong, Taiwan and the PRC relationship. Finally, since the PRC, as a rising economic powerhouse, is incorporating itself into the world order, this study may also provide a new point of view to understand the PRC and its reform, which is gradually extending from the economic to the cultural domain with the country's imperative to exert its "soft power." The contextual and conjunctural approach to the interactive aspects of production, reception and policies in this cultural industry enhances the understanding of Hong Kong as a Special Administration Region of the PRC, and can illuminate the future studies of the PRC and the Asia-Pacific Region within the global capitalist cultural economy.

Chapter Seven

Films For (and By) a “Culturally Unified” China:

Hong Kong Martial Arts Films as Pan-Chinese Cinema

Division Is a Misfortune for the Chinese People

.....

We are confident that the wisdom and efforts of the entire Chinese people will help us to ... eventually complete the sacred mission of unifying China under democracy, freedom, and equitable prosperity.

*ROC White Paper, “Relations across the Taiwan Strait,”
(ROC Mainland Affairs Council, July 29 1994: n.pag.)*

To settle the Taiwan question and achieve national reunification— this is a sacrosanct mission of the entire Chinese people.

*PRC White Paper, “The Taiwan Question and Reunification of China,”
(PRC State Council, August 31 1993: n.pag.)*

The ultimate goal of the “one country, two systems” proposal of the PRC is to solve the division of China under the two political entities (the PRC and the ROC) since 1949, thus to achieve the political reunification of China. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, despite Taiwan (ROC) government’s adherence to the “one China” principle, Taipei has been firm in its rejection of Beijing’s “one country, two systems” offer on the ground that “the relationship between the two systems is one of principal

and subordinate” (ROC White Paper on Relations across the Taiwan Strait by ROC Mainland Affairs Council, 1994: n. p.). Therefore, more than ten years after Hong Kong and Macao have been set up as models for the “one country, two systems” policy, the Taiwan issue remains an *impasse*. Towards this sovereignty dispute, it seems that both sides across the Taiwan Strait have pragmatically adopted a “pro-status quo approach” (Huang and Li, 2010: 296; P. C. Y. Chow, 2002: 147). Meanwhile, the cultural ties between the two regions, as well as among the whole Greater China area, have been enhanced through the increasing economic exchanges brought by the PRC’s opening-up policy and its huge economic dynamism. In this context, the avalanche of pan-Chinese co-produced martial arts period films has become a noteworthy phenomenon reflecting a trend of imagining a “China” which is acknowledged by all Chinese people across the politically demarcated territories and is able to speak to them all in cultural terms.

Initially, this new craze of martial arts films among Chinese-language cinemas is triggered by the unprecedented global success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) – a Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China co-production— hitherto the only Oscar-winning Chinese-language film and the highest-grossing foreign-language film in American history (as repeatedly mentioned earlier). Soon after, the top directors in Mainland China, such as Zhang Yimou, Feng Xiaogang and Chen Kaige, have all followed suit to partner with Hong Kong production companies to make big-budget historical movies. At the same time, inspired by the commercial successes of these films at the Mainland market, the northbound Hong Kong filmmakers also joined the trend. Among them are internationally-acclaimed Hong Kong film directors such as John Woo, Tsui Hark and Peter Chan Ho-sun, who returned to Chinese-language film-making from their temporary Hollywood careers in late 1990s. Notably, among this revival of martial arts film genre, the Mainland-born, Hong Kong-based Chinese-American actor Donnie

Yen has successfully risen to the status of the fourth Chinese *kung fu* megastar after Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li. Donnie Yen's stardom has, therefore, reinforced the de-territorialised "pan-Chinese" feature of the recent martial arts films which I will discuss in detail in this chapter.

In fact, the cross border flow of the skilled personnel, financial investment and techniques is leading to an integrated pan-Chinese filmmaking model, especially in producing those high-budget blockbuster-type movies. As the co-production with the Mainland becomes "usual practice" of Hong Kong cinema, the participation and involvement of Taiwanese and Singaporean cinema in these co-produced films has also become more common. Commercially, this pan-Chinese co-operation mode not only helps with the problems of financing and risk-sharing of high-budget productions, but also works to expand their markets to Chinese-speaking audiences on different territories. Culturally speaking, the preference of the martial arts genre and the historical setting is a savvy choice to embrace their common Chinese national heritage and historical memory, while at the same time to eschew the present political divergences across the Taiwan Strait and between the "two systems."

Historically speaking, it is the establishment of the Communist regime on Mainland China in 1949 that has resulted in the present divisive situation across the Taiwan Strait, and the "two systems" demarcation between the de-colonised Hong Kong territory and its homeland. Therefore, almost all of these Chinese martial arts films have chosen to be set in ancient feudalist dynasties, or at least, the Republican era (1911-1949) of China. In other words, these pan-Chinese films have portrayed/constructed a past or imaginary China which can be identified with and shared by all people with Chinese ancestry in the separated territories. In these historical films, the commonality of Chinese history,

tradition and culture has overshadowed the regional specificities of any particular Chinese society. Therefore, it is hard to classify these pan-Chinese films under Hong Kong, Taiwan, or Mainland Chinese cinema. It is a fact that due to the existing political divisions of China, there are usually three separate entries respectively for Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwanese cinemas under the category of “world cinema” in academic publications and in international film awards. However, as for these newly emerged pan-Chinese historical films, both industrially and aesthetically, it would be more appropriate to see them as films of (and for) a “culturally unified” China in spite of the fact that the grand political reunification of China is still a dream yet to be fulfilled.

In this chapter, I will expound on the commercial and cultural factors or considerations that have led to the springing up of pan-Chinese martial arts period films. Special attention will be paid to how these films utilise particular approaches, such as screening an ancient China as a unitary homeland, adapting and reinterpreting the classic Chinese literature in the present context, and introducing the new *kung fu* icon by employing anti-imperialist Chinese cultural nationalism. By examining how filmmakers project their concerns and understandings about the current situation of China onto the past/imaginary China in their films, I will concentrate on the theme of the “unification of China” to shed light on the present predicament of a divided China from a cultural perspective.

Pan-Chinese Cinema: the Fourth Entry under the Rubric of “Chinese Cinema(s)”?

Chinese cinema is “a particularly compelling site for... knowing what the Chinese nation is” (Berry, 1998: 131). Due to the political disintegration of China since 1949,

three Chinese cinemas located respectively on the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong took shape in the 1950s. There has been a constant debate over the taxonomy of Chinese cinema. To most people, just as “China” usually means the PRC on the Chinese mainland, the phrases such as “Chinese cinema” and “Chinese film” often refer only to Mainland Chinese cinema. This monolithic definition of Chinese cinema as the PRC cinema is reflected in books like *Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics Since 1949* (Clark, 1987) and many others (Semsel, 1987; Semsel et al., 1993; Silbergeld, 1999; Carnelius & Smith, 2002; Kuoshu, 2002; Cui, 2003; Zhu & Rosen, 2010), which had all excluded films from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Meanwhile, there are also books that have indiscriminately included Chinese-language films from the three places under the label of “Chinese cinema” as a whole, such as *New Chinese Cinema* (Tam and Dissanayake, 1998) and *Chinese National Cinema* (Zhang, 2004). By using “Chinese cinema” in singular form to cover all films produced in the three territories, Zhang (2004) cautiously points out that the word “Chinese” here should be understood “in predominantly *cultural* and *historical* terms (original emphasis)” and the reader should “keep in mind all problematics or messiness – theoretical as well as geopolitical – surrounding ‘China’ and ‘Chineseness’” (p.5) .

In fact, in order to differentiate the three kinds of Chinese cinema while including them all, there is a third kind of classification by deploying the plural form of Chinese cinemas as in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics* (Browne et al. 1994) and *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Lu, 1997). To explain his use of the plural form, Nick Browne contends that “[t]he People’s Republic [of China], Taiwan, and Hong Kong and their cinemas are marked as socialist, capitalist and colonialist, respectively” while “a common cultural tradition of social, ideological,

and aesthetic forms that stands behind and informs Chinese cinema as a whole” should not be overlooked (Browne et al, 1994: 1).

More recently, other terms such as “Chinese-language film” (Lu & Yeh, 2005) or “Sinophone cinema” (Shih, 2007) have taken the similar approach of encompassing all films from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and even sometimes Singapore, under their shared cultural tradition (in this case, their common linguistic identification). To some extent, the publication of the book *Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas* (Lim, 2007), along with the launch of an academic journal called *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* in the same year, indicated the increasing acceptance of regarding “Chinese cinema as a category composed of different regional cinemas” (Pang, 2007b: 55) in the field of Chinese film/cultural studies. It seems that the debate over the taxonomy of Chinese cinema has found some common ground. However, new developments in the Chinese-language film industries soon raised new challenges to this territorial-based composition approach to Chinese cinema(s).

It is in this *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* that Berry and Pang (2008: 3) co-edited a special issue to express “a need to interrogate its ‘routine’ use and taken-for-grantedness” of “the very terms ‘Chinese cinemas’ (in the plural) and ‘transnational Chinese cinemas’.” In their “Introduction, or, What’s in an ‘s’?”, Berry and Pang (2008: 3) wrote:

When we first wrote the proposal for this special issue and sent it in to the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, we called it ‘What is transnational Chinese cinema?’ The editor of the journal, Song Hwee Lim, accepted the proposal, but

asked us to change the title to ‘What are transnational Chinese cinemas?’.....

Our initial use of the singular was not to invoke that old idea of a monolithic national cinema. Rather, we were recognizing that the transnationalisation of Chinese film-making practices has in fact weakened the separation between Chinese cinemas that Lim points to as a primary reason for the use of the plural.

What they mean by the weakened separation between Chinese cinemas initially started from the blurring of Hong Kong and mainland Chinese film-making. Berry and Pang noted (and as I have also discussed in previous chapters), that the gradual blending of the two cinemas is a result of Hong Kong film’s increasing dependence on the Mainland for audiences, sources of finance, scripts and actors, and consequently, Hong Kong film-makers’ “increasingly making films with the mainland in mind” (Berry and Pang, 2008: 4). Therefore, they specified that “where Lim adds the ‘s’ to counter any monolithic understanding of Chinese cinema, we removed it to recognize the increasing move away from that monolithic model, but in the form of transnational linkages” (Berry and Pang, 2008: 5).

In this respect, Berry and Pang’s proposed term “transnational Chinese cinema” is similar to what I mean by “pan-Chinese cinema” here, as both of them are based on the recognition of the increasing cooperation and accelerating integration among the different Chinese cinemas. Berry and Pang (2008: 3) put forward the notion “transnational Chinese cinema” in its singular form intentionally to highlight its difference from “transnational Chinese cinemas,” the umbrella term for all Chinese-language films, so as to bring awareness to the “transnational linkages” among them all. However, I invoke the term “pan-Chinese cinema” here in this chapter to delineate a certain type of martial arts period film which has gradually dominated the Chinese-

language cinema as a whole, and can be seen as a supplement to the three territory-based Chinese cinemas on account of its “identity confusion (or, interfusion)” (Beus, 2008: 306).

The term “pan-Chinese cinema”, as to my knowledge, has been used in as early as the 1990s to describe the budding co-operation among Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China in film-making. In her paper “*Farewell My Concubine*: History, Melodrama, and Ideology in Contemporary Pan-Chinese Cinema”, Lau (1995) elucidated the trend of “pan-Chinese” film co-production through detailed case study of this 1993 Cannes Film Festival Palme d’Or winning film. Lau unequivocally explained that the word “pan-Chinese” in her paper as a term that “is used to refer to the combined society of Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China.” (Lau, 1995: 27) These 1990s pan-Chinese films usually followed the similar model of production with a Mainland Chinese director (mostly the Fifth Generation) and a Hong Kong film production company sponsored by Taiwan investment (and sometimes with other foreign funds involved, such as from Japan or France). This unprecedented film co-production mode first challenged the territorial-based taxonomy of Chinese cinemas as a three-way split.

For example, *Farewell My Concubine* won the Palme d’Or as a Mainland Chinese film according to the nationality of its director Chen Kaige. However, the Beijing government had banned the film at home because of its political sensitivity at that time. At the same time, the film was nominated for Best Foreign Language Film at the 1993 Academy Awards as a Hong Kong entry according to the registered address of its production company—Tomson Films. However, this Hong Kong-based film production company was actually founded by Taiwanese producer Hsu Feng because Taiwan-registered companies were not allowed to cooperate with the Mainland filmmakers due

to the restrictions of the Taipei government.

Another similar example is *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) directed by Mainland Chinese director Zhang Yimou, which was also temporarily banned in Mainland China and got nominated at the Academy Awards in 1992 as Hong Kong's entry. In terms of thematic and aesthetic styles, these two films, and many others of this type, are distinctly different from Hong Kong or Taiwanese films. This is why these "pan-Chinese" films had often been classified as a PRC film, as in the above -mentioned books that were meant to be exclusively on the subject of mainland Chinese cinema (Silbergeld, 1999; Carnelius & Smith, 2002).

However, considering the fact that these "PRC films" had often been banned on the Mainland, in his highly cited paper "Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s", Stephen Crofts (1993: 57) argued that they are a "peripheral production" to the totalitarian PRC cinema which "sought to convince viewers of the virtues of the existing political order." Therefore, Crofts (1993) considered the Chinese Fifth Generation Cinema with international sponsorship involved, but had been banned at home (which is also what Lau (1995) later called "pan-Chinese cinema") as a form of "exiled" filmmaking of the PRC, similar to the Chilean diasporic cinema due to Pinochet's military dictatorship on Chile. As mentioned above, these pan-Chinese films were also denied access to the Taiwan market in the early 1990s because of their Mainland involvement. Therefore, despite their positive reception at international film festivals, the limited number of films co-produced by the "three Chinese cinemas" in the 1990s had been doubly exiled by the two Chinese regimes across the Taiwan Strait, and could only be registered under the name of "Hong Kong cinema." In other words, due to the political tension and restraints in both the PRC and Taiwan, the pan-Chinese cinema of the 1990s could

only be categorically labeled as films of Hong Kong, the neutral zone under British colonial rule at the time.

Unlike the rudimentary pan-Chinese filmmaking of the 1990s which was doubly exiled from Mainland and Taiwan, the two major Chinese film markets as a trend of revival of pan-Chinese filmmaking in the new century is primarily based on an unobstructed network of Chinese-language film markets across the Greater China areas. With this bigger, border-crossing Chinese-language film market in mind, the filmmakers deliberately avoided the social economic disparities among different Chinese societies in their film co-productions. Rather than taking up a specific region (such as Mainland China, or Hong Kong, Taiwan) as its subject matter, these pan-Chinese films enhanced their acceptance by constructing an imaginary “cultural China” with shared historical memories, cultural heritage, and sometimes anti-imperialist Chinese nationalist sentiment. In terms of film production, distribution and exhibition, as well as the thematic and aesthetic styles, this newly emergent pan-Chinese cinema, or “transnational Chinese cinema” in its singular form as Berry and Pang (2008) had intended to name it, has become a compelling phenomenon within the complicated scope of “transnational Chinese cinemas.” Therefore, I argue that the newly emerged pan-Chinese cinema can be regarded as the fourth entry of “Chinese cinemas” besides the other three territorially-based cinemas (Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan).

Moreover, both textually and contextually, the emergence and expansion of this kind of pan-Chinese cinema incorporates the thousand-year-old “Grand Unity” (*Da Yi Tong*) thought of China. The formation of pan-Chinese cinema belonging to an imaginarily unified “cultural China”, to some extent, illustrates Chris Berry’s (1998: 131) statement that “it is not so much China that makes movies, but movies that help to make China”

as a national agency.

To that end, this chapter will focus on how these pan-Chinese films help build up the onscreen image of a “cultural China” despite its predicament of a divided China in reality. I will approach the pan-Chinese cinema through its most popular genre — martial arts films — in a broader sense, including subgenres such as *wu xia* (swordplay), *kung fu* (fistfight) and historical war dramas. I will demonstrate how martial arts films, the trademark of Hong Kong cinema, have provided a platform for pan-Chinese film co-production by taking advantage of Chinese history and classic Chinese literature, and by invoking anti-imperialist Chinese nationalism. Moreover, I will elucidate how the low budget B-class martial arts films of Hong Kong have evolved into the extravagant pan-Chinese blockbusters (*Guo Chan Da Pian*) that are significant cinematic contributions to the “national reunification” undertaking.

1. Screening Ancient China:

Imagining a Unitary Homeland in the Historical Setting

Starting from Ang Lee’s groundbreaking *wu xia* (swordplay) film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), the newly emerged pan-Chinese blockbuster movies are almost all period costume films set in ancient China. Such a bygone or even imagined China portrayed in swordplay films, as Taiwan-born director Ang Lee puts it, is a “dream of China, a China that probably never existed, except in my boyhood fantasies in Taiwan.” (as cited in Berry & Farquhar, 2006: 67) However, this “dream of China” set in the remote past has become the vogue for Chinese-language filmmaking as a whole thanks to the absence of tangible affiliation to any present political power. Therefore, the wide acceptance of *Crouching Tiger* in the three major Chinese film markets has rekindled

the enthusiasm for costumed *wu xia* films. More filmmakers from both mainland China and Hong Kong have joined the trend of martial arts blockbusters, and gained their access to every Chinese-speaking film market by constructing an onscreen ancient China as a common homeland for different Chinese societies.

1.1 Martial Arts Films as the Emerging Pan-Chinese Blockbusters

The notion of “blockbuster” (*Da Pian*, literally “big film”) as an “event film” with great commercial appeal was first introduced to mainland China with the importation of Hollywood films started in 1994. For years in mainland China, the word “blockbuster” was regarded as synonymous with Hollywood “mega imports” (Zhang, 2004: 282), which implies not only high-budget, spectacular scenes, but also “less serious and lacking in pedagogical purpose” (Berry, 2003: 223). In his paper “‘What’s big about the big film?’: ‘De-Westerning’ the blockbuster in Korea and China”, Chris Berry (2003) precisely points out that in the PRC, relatively high budget Chinese films used to fall into two categories: the “giant film” (or “epic”) and the “big film” (or “blockbuster”). The conceptual distinction between the two is that, as Berry (2003: 223) puts it,

“Giant films” follow what the government refers to as the “main melody” (*zhuxuanlu*), meaning the prioritisation of pedagogy, whereas the emphasis on entertainment in “big films” places them outside this category.

Berry argues that the historical epic *The Opium War* (*Ya Pain Zhan Zheng*, 1997, dir. Xie Jin), the most expansive Mainland Chinese film at the time of its production, marks the end of the discursive opposition between the “giant film” and the “big film” and “it also suggests a turn ...towards the idea of a qualitatively different and

superior Chinese blockbuster” (Berry, 2003: 223). Based on the shared historical memory of the Opium Wars to mark the return of Hong Kong, the film was fairly well received in all three Chinese film markets. Therefore, film critic Zhang Yingjin also refers to *The Opium War*, the PRC-produced historical film with substantial Hong Kong involvement (co-written and co-produced by leading Hong Kong filmmaker Ann Hui) as one of the few PRC films marking “the age of post-socialist commercialisation” (Zhang, 2004: 286). In a sense, *The Opium War* has set up a workable example of taking advantage of the common Chinese history to make (pan-)Chinese blockbusters accessible and acceptable to different Chinese film markets.

However, the prevalence of the phrase “Chinese blockbuster” did not start until the end of 2002 with the phenomenal theatrical release of *Hero* (*Ying Xiong*, dir. Zhang Yimou), a Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced martial arts film. As mentioned in previous chapters, the year 2002 was the first year that the PRC increased its import quota of foreign films (mainly Hollywood films) from ten to 20 per year in accordance with its WTO entry pre-condition. It was also in the year 2002 that the PRC launched a nationwide reform of film distribution and exhibition system by introducing the cinema-line system to replace the monopolistic state-run distribution structure (Wang, 2003: 68). For the purpose of preparing the national film industry for the “invasion” of Hollywood blockbusters, the promotion of indigenous Chinese blockbusters was strongly supported by the state apparatus — the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television (SARFT).

In this context, the martial arts epic *Hero* “marks the point at which transformation of the [Chinese] local cinema industry into a commercial cinema is confirmed” (Berry,

2010: xxiv). In his foreword to *Global Chinese Cinema: The Culture and Politics of Hero*, an anthology of essays devoted to this Chinese film, Chris Berry (2010) claims that *Hero* is “a watershed film” that “marked a turnaround for Chinese cinema both at home and abroad” (p.xxiii). Starting from *Hero* (2002), the mainland Chinese film market witnessed the advent of the martial arts blockbuster era. Films like Zhang Yimou’s *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (*Shi Mian Mai Fu*, 2004), *Curse of the Golden Flowers* (*Man Cheng Jin Dai Huang Jin Jia*, 2006), Chen Kaige’s *The Promise* (*Wu Ji*, 2006) and Feng Xiaogang’s *The Banquet* (*Ye Yan*, 2006) are all extravagant martial arts costume films, which Davis and Yeh (2008) conclude as PRC directors’ “attempt to clone blockbusters with acceptably Chinese characteristics” (p.6).

However, it would be inaccurate to classify these Chinese blockbusters simply as mainland Chinese film according to their director background. Like those pan-Chinese productions in the early 1990s, behind the Mainland art-house directors of these films, there are always operations of Hong Kong or/and Taiwan film production companies and executive producers. Taking *Hero* for instance, it was produced by Hong Kong veteran film producer William Kong of Edko film studio, who had also co-produced *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). In a strict sense, *Hero* is not the first pan-Chinese blockbuster which achieved global success. It clearly followed the aesthetic and financial models of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), the pan-Chinese production directed by Hollywood-based Taiwanese director Ang Lee. However, as far as capital and distribution patterns are concerned, *Crouching Tiger* was “partially an American film” (Berry, 2010: xxiv) or “actually a diaspora Chinese film” (Davis & Yeh, 2008: 26). Hence, *Hero* became the first PRC officially sanctioned and supported pan-Chinese film production to blaze the trail for high-budget martial arts films as Chinese blockbusters conducive to an integrated Chinese-language film industry and

market based on the Greater China.



Figure 7.1 Movie poster of *Hero* (2002)

Some critics have seen *Hero* as “a [PRC] local response to international forces and pressure” (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2010: 1). However, I contend that *Hero*, as well as the following emergence of a pan-Chinese martial arts blockbuster trend, should also be seen as a compromise formula worked out between the PRC and the Hong Kong film industries, as they both are eager to survive the expansion of Hollywood. Screening an ancient China in these martial arts blockbusters is a practical marketing strategy for pan-Chinese productions from three reasons: censorship, piracy, and reconciling the separated Chinese film markets.

First, the choice of the martial arts period genre is out of consideration for potential censorship. This is because period martial arts films more easily avoid censorship when compared with other action genres such as crime or gangster films, or sensitive social realistic films. For example, Hong Kong producer William Kong has pioneered

in redirecting his focus on martial arts films in his co-productions with the PRC. Early in the 1990s, when William Kong first co-operated with the Mainland filmmakers, he had co-produced a realist drama *The Blue Kite* (*Lan Feng Zheng*, 1993, dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang). Unfortunately, this film was banned in Mainland China because of its direct depiction of post-1949 communist political movements in the PRC (Zhu, 2003: 123). Since the new century, William Kong has succeeded in his new co-operation with Mainland film industry, and produced many awards-winning martial arts films including *Crouching Tiger* (2000), *Hero* (2002) and such as *Red Cliff* (2008). Compared to the modern topics, the remote historical setting of the martial arts film is a relatively safe zone, far from the social reality of China so as to avoid controversies that might agitate the PRC censors. Therefore, in a sense, the revival of martial arts films as blockbusters (*da pian*) was in a way indirectly facilitated by the PRC government. However, this “ancient China” strategy should not be seen as mere concession made by Hong Kong filmmaker to the PRC. It has also reflected the internal conflict within the PRC between its rigid “socialist” film regulation and its newly adopted market-driven “capitalist” economy. In this respect, historical blockbusters have met the needs of all three sides – commercial Hong Kong cinema, the commercialisation/marketisation of Mainland cinema and the Party-State censorship.

Second, the costumed martial arts films can serve as a great vehicle for big-screen spectacular blockbusters to win back audiences from rival small media, such as free-to-air television and pirated VCDs and DVDs. A major reason, then, for the Chinese-language film industry to develop its own blockbusters is to recover from loss to piracy and alternative media. Besides legal action, one of the effective ways to entice film audience back to the cinema is to emphasise the theatrical experience through the

“impact aesthetic” (King, 2003: 117) of blockbuster movies. In the case of contemporary Hollywood, “[a] substantial part of the appeal of many blockbusters lies precisely in the scale of spectacular audio-visual experience that is offered, in contrast to the smaller-scale resources of rival films or media” (King, 2003: 114). The rampant film piracy in Hong Kong in the 1990s was one of the reasons that its cinema has lost its conventional share to Hollywood in its domestic market, and resulted in an Anti-Piracy Protest of Hong Kong filmmakers in March 1999.

In an effort to emulate Hollywood’s large-scale spectacle, since the end of the 1990s Hong Kong cinema started to enhance digital effects in its local products, especially in B-class martial arts films which used to mainly depend on primitive wirework (as I have discussed in chapter three). In fact, the lavish costumes, sets and CGI effects-laden spectacles in the martial arts blockbusters have proven to be effective in stimulating the theatergoing audiences. With a budget of about US\$30 million, a record for a Chinese-language film, *Hero* successfully recouped the production cost in the Mainland market alone by setting the new box-office record at 250 million RMB (about US\$39 million). Moreover, since 2002, the year that *Hero* was released, that the total box-office revenue for Chinese-language films for the first time surpassed that of Hollywood “mega imports” in mainland China (Liu, 2010:168). For the following seven consecutive years, with the coming trend of Chinese martial arts blockbusters, the Chinese-language films have outperformed the imported films in the Mainland market, despite the doubled number of imported films since 2002 (Xinhua News, 2010) .

Last, the historical setting of martial arts films is functional in reconciling the needs of different Chinese-speaking markets. With the increased production costs of blockbuster movies, a perennial concern for film investors and producers is how to maximise their

potential audiences. Besides a pan-Chinese star-studded cast, history becomes another popular ingredient in pan-Chinese blockbusters. In the widely divergent Chinese societies under different social, political and economic systems, the common Chinese historical background successfully “embraces and arouses powerful emotions associated with identity, common roots and a shared heritage” (Rawnsley, 2010: 17).

Hero (2002), a combination of a historical figure and event within a fictionalised tale, is loosely based on the legend of the assassination of Emperor Qin in the late Warring States Period (about 479 BCE to 221 BCE). The controversial ending of the film – that the swordsman gives up the assassination in the hope that Emperor Qin would end the war, unify China and bring peace to the people – has resulted in criticism on the film as “a paean to authoritarianism” and “a glorification of ruthless leadership and self-sacrifice on the altar of national greatness” (Rawnsley, 2010: 21). However, the mysterious history of ancient China has proven popular in not only Chinese-speaking film markets, but also neighboring countries such as Japan and Korea. Therefore, it had stimulated the imagination of more filmmakers to interpret Chinese history and even to make reference to present day society.

In 2006, Hong Kong director Jacob Cheung Chi Leung released *A Battle of Wits* (*Mo Gong*), a more expensive epic set in the Warring States Period. Based on a Japanese historical novel of the same name, *A Battle of Wits* is co-produced by Hong Kong, Mainland China, Japan and Korea. In contrast to reverence toward the historic figures and indifference to individual life expressed in *Hero*, *A Battle of Wits* promotes a humanitarian idea of “universal love” (*jian ai*) for all people. Hong Kong *kung fu* icon Jackie Chan also made two co-produced films related to the subject of Warring States and Emperor Qin’s unification of China: *The Myth* (*Shen Hua*, 2005) and *Little Big*

Soldier (Da Bing Xiao Jiang, 2010). The former revolves around the myth of terracotta warriors of Qin dynasty (221 BCE to 207 BCE), while the later reveals the trauma of war by contrasting the little soldier's dream of a peaceful life with the general's ambition of conquering other states.



Figure 7.2-4 Movie posters of three pan-Chinese blockbusters set in Warring States Period
A Battle of Wits (2006), *The Myth* (2005) and *Little Big Soldier* (2010)

Despite the differences in value orientation represented in these historical martial arts films, commercially they have initiated the trend of pan-Chinese blockbusters as a distinctive genre for Chinese-language cinema(s). Taking the advantage of the richness of Chinese history, the emerging martial arts blockbusters have, to a certain degree, overcome the difficulties with PRC censorship, film piracy and the divergent tastes of Chinese audiences scattered in different territories. Consequently, the vibrant atmosphere of the Chinese-language film industry has attracted back many Hong Kong filmmakers to return to Chinese-language filmmaking who had moved to Hollywood when Hong Kong cinema was at its low ebb in the late 1990s. Internationally acclaimed actors like Chow Yun-fat and directors such as Tsui Hark, John Woo and Peter Chan Ho-sun have all joined the pan-Chinese filmmaking trend based in mainland China, their homeland in a broader sense, instead of returning to Hong Kong.

Among these returnees from Hollywood, Peter Chan Ho-sun has been generally acknowledged as the most adaptable and successful director and producer of pan-Chinese blockbusters. According to the official website of his studio Cinema Popular (2012), in working in the Mainland from 2004 to 2009, he has produced or directed four co-productions which altogether have generated a staggering RMB600 million (about US\$93.7 million) in Mainland China box office alone (of which the two martial arts films have accounted for about 80 per cent) (www.wepictures.com). In a sense, Peter Chan's career trajectory in Hong Kong, Hollywood and, presently, Beijing is a perfect illustration of the change and transformation of Hong Kong cinema since 1997.

1.2 Peter Chan Ho-sun: From a Pan-Asian to a Pan-Chinese Cinema Model

After leaving Hong Kong in the late 1990s, Peter Chan Ho-sun had a very brief career in Hollywood with only one English production *The Lover Letter* (1999) with DreamWorks SKG Studios. Later he has gradually drew attention from academia (Ciecko, 2006; Davis & Yeh, 2008; V. Lee, 2009; Klein, 2010) for his successful initiation on a pan-Asian cinema model through his company, Applause Pictures, which was founded in 2000. As declared in the website of Applause Pictures, "With friends and contacts in Korea, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, and its home-base Hong Kong, this pan-Asian production house sets out to syndicate financing, promote co-production agreements, encourage the exchange of talent on both sides of the camera, and to expand the regional and global distribution possibilities for the new pan-Asian films" (Applausepictures.com). As Davis & Yeh (2008: 85) note, Peter Chan's pan-Asian schema is a response to the decline of individual national cinemas in Asia that "necessitated investment schemes to amplify market potential and spread the risk" and his Hong Kong-based Applause Pictures "shows a transnational drive to connect and

consolidate the whole Asia-Pacific market” (Ibid: 94).

From 2001 to 2004, through Applause Pictures, Peter Chan had produced several commercially and critically acclaimed pan-Asian films in differently languages, including *Jan Dara* (2001) in Thai, *One Fine Spring Day* (2001) in Korea, the omnibus horror movie *Three* (2002), and its second instalment *Three...Extremes* (2004) in Thai, Korea and Cantonese. The most successful example of Applause Pictures’ pan-Asian films is the 2002 supernatural horror movie *The Eye*, which later became a Hollywood remake produced by Peter Chan himself. In talking about this highly impressive work, Peter Chan revealed his secret of success in the pan-Asian strategy. With Malaysia-born, Taiwan/Hong Kong-based actress Angelica Lee Sinjie, Singaporean actors and co-financing from Singapore Raintree-MediaCorp (as discussed in Chapter 6), and part of the storyline in Thailand, “it [*The Eye*] had elements from everywhere, so everyone treated it as if it was their own baby” (Chan, as cited in Davis & Yeh, 2008: 96)

However, immediately after the implementation of the CEPA in 2004, Peter Chan shifted his attention from the Asia Pacific to the Mainland Chinese market. The following year, Peter Chan directed and produced an extravagant Mandarin musical, *Perhaps Love* (2005, *Ru Guo Ai*), set in contemporary Mainland China. The film has continued Peter Chan’s pan-Asian “elements-from-everywhere” recipe, with the participation of Mainland actress Zhou Xun, Hong Kong mega star, CantoPop King Jackie Cheung, Japanese-Taiwanese actor Takashi Kaneshiro, Korea actor Ji Jin-Hee, Bollywood choreography team, and co-financing by Beijing-based private film company Stellar Megamedia, Hong Kong TVB (Television Broadcasts Limited) and Malaysian Astro All Asia Networks. However, the overwhelming “Mainland China” factor in the film has clearly indicated that *Perhaps Love* can be seen as Peter Chan’s

trial project for the Mainland market and production environment. As a result, the project turned out to be quite rewarding, with *Perhaps Love* becoming one of the top grossing films in the Mainland market in 2006, and the leading actress Zhou Xun garnering Best Actress Awards from both the HKFA and Golden Horse Award in Taiwan (as previously mentioned in Chapter 2). The following work directed by Peter Chan, the historical war epic film *The Warlords* (2007, *Tou Ming Zhuang*, literally “Blood Oath of Brotherhood”), then clearly established his fame as a pioneering and prominent Hong Kong filmmaker in the new field of pan-Chinese cinema.

In fact, early in the pre-handover era, Peter Chan already revealed an embryonic concern with pan-Chinese cultural identity through his classic work *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (*Tian Mi Mi*, literally: “Sweet Honey”, 1996). Through the bittersweet romance between two Mainlanders struggling for a better life in Hong Kong and then in New York, the film “depicts the state of perpetual diaspora and displacement” and “seems to suggest a more ambivalent relationship of ethnic Chinese to their home country” (Lu, 2001: 278). Released in November 1996 just before the handover “deadline”, this melodrama was well-received among audiences and film critics. It won a record breaking nine awards at the HKFA, including Best Picture and Best Director.

Partially, the popularity of *Comrades* lies in that “the specific issue of 1997 is universalised into a problem of exile and the loss of home,” and “the local question is reconsidered by the filmmaker in the light of an intertextual, cross-cultural, and transnational vision” (Lo, 2001 :273). More important, as both Kwai-Cheung Lo (2001) and Sheldon H. Lu (2001) point out in a different occasions, is the use of the Mandarin pop song *Tian Mi Mi* (“Sweet Honey”) by Taiwan singer Teresa Tang (Deng Lijun) as the film title and the theme song. As I have already mentioned in Chapter Two when

discussing the function of music in the narrative of Peter Chan's films, the use of the song *Tian Mi Mi* in the film of the same title has helped "narrate and reinvent a fluid and multiple trans-Chinese identity" (Lo, 2001: 273) and "unite ethnic Chinese and Hong Kongers into some sense of communal belonging" (Lu, 2001: 278). In terms of building a common Chinese cultural identification, this deterritorialised Chinese song functions in the same way as the use of a past/imagined ancient China in the recent historical martial arts films, a new genre to which Peter Chan has quickly adapted.

The two martial arts blockbusters Peter Chan, *The Warlords* (2007, as director) and *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009, as producer), have each scored a stunning eight awards in the HKFA, including Best Film and Best Director – only one fewer than the record of nine awards for a single film for Peter Chan's own *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (1996). Moreover, as proudly introduced in the website of his newly founded Beijing-based WE Pictures, *The Warlords* (2007) grossed a record RMB220 million (about US\$35 million) in China and over US\$40 million across Asia, while *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009) garnered a spectacular RMB300 million (about US\$46.8 million) in China box office alone, accumulating over US\$50 million Asia-wide (WePictures.com).



Figure 7. 5-6 Movie posters for *The Warlords* (2007) and *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009)

The great successes of his two martial arts blockbusters should not be simply taken for granted because of the popularity of this genre. *Bodyguards and Assassins* owes its success to Peter Chan’s clever use of cultural nationalism, which I will come to later in the chapter. More importantly, the significance of *The Warlords* (2007) actually lies in that, through a different thematic and aesthetic style, it has revived audiences’ jaded appetite for the martial arts genre caused by its overabundance since the sensation made by *Hero* in 2002.

At the 26th HKFA held in April 2007, seven months before the theatrical release of *The Warlords* in November that year, two martial arts-packed historical dramas have won both the Best Actress and Supporting Actress Awards for their mainland actresses: Gong Li for *Curse of the Golden Flowers* (2006, dir. Zhang Yimou) and Zhou Xun for *The Banquet* (2006, dir. Feng Xiaogang). Both directed by mainland filmmakers with a pan-Chinese cast, these two films have revealed a striking similarity. Through glittery costumes and dazzling setting designs, the two films have both taken up the theme of cruel and ugly imperial court intrigues being set in fictionalised ancient Chinese dynasties. The fact that the two films were chosen respectively as the Oscar entries for

the PRC and Hong Kong has stirred anxieties about the cultural homogenisation of Chinese-language film industries, and criticisms of their possibly negative impact on social values. These controversies may have led to the extravagant *Curse of the Golden Flowers* losing the major awards, such as Best Film and Best Director at the HKFA to the medium-budget melodrama *After This Our Exile* set in Malaysia directed by Patrick Tam Kar Ming (as discussed in Chapter Four). Out of its fourteen nominations, surprisingly *Curse of the Golden Flowers* only won three technical awards – Best Art Direction, Best Costume and Makeup Design and Best Original Film Song – besides the Best Actress Award.



Figure 7.7 Movie Still from *Curse of the Golden Flowers* (2007) starring Mainland Actress Gong Li (middle), Hollywood-returned Hong Kong mega star Chow Yun-fat (right) and Taiwanese singer/actor Jay Chou Chieh-lun (left)



Figure 7.8 Movie Still from *The Warlords* (2007) starring *kung fu* star Jet Li (middle), Hong Kong actor Andy Lau (left) and Japanese-Taiwanese actor Takeshi Kaneshiro (right)

In contrast to the resplendent palace setting in Zhang Yimou's *Curse*, Peter Chan's *The*

Warlords “eschews the spectacular swordplay of Zhang’s film, sustaining throughout a bleak and gritty imagery of desperate killings in the battlefield.” (V. Lee, 2009: 207) Moreover, *The Warlords* has returned to the masculinist tradition of Hong Kong *kung fu* films by emphasising the male bonding of the three sworn brothers. Literally the Chinese title *Tou Ming Zhuang* refers to an ancient Chinese ceremony of bandits sacrificing innocent lives as their blood oath for their fraternity. Most importantly, based on the real historical incident of the assassination of Qing dynasty military general Ma Xinyi in the late 19th century, the film arouses patriotic indignation about the image of war-ridden China under a corrupt feudal regime. Generally speaking, both aesthetically and thematically, Peter Chan’s *The Warlords* has transfigured the pan-Chinese martial arts genre pioneered by Zhang Yimou.

In fact, the Qing dynasty story of the assassination of General Ma had been repeatedly adapted in Hong Kong *kung fu* films in the 1970s. The most famous version is Chang Cheh’s *Blood Brothers* (1973, a.k.a. *Chinese Vengeance* or *Dynasty of Blood*) produced by the Shaw Brothers studio. Chang Cheh’s classic work interpreted the assassination as a tragedy caused by a love triangle between the sworn brothers, while Peter Chan emphasised the conflicts between individual political ambition and brotherhood solidarity by highlighting the historical background of the long running civil war during the Taiping Rebellion (1850-1864) against the ruling of Qing dynasty.

As mentioned earlier, this strategy of utilizing history or historiography has proven effective and even vital in the recent building of a pan-Chinese cinema in an effort to connect and consolidate the Chinese-speaking film markets. As Chinese scholar Yingjie Guo (2004: 65) contends, “so far as national identity is concerned, what is essential is a sense of common history” and “[t]he most essential elements that make up the soul and

spiritual principle of a nation is the possession in common of a rich heritage of memories.” Therefore, by screening an ancient China, these pan-Chinese films create a unitary homeland for the audiences who residing in the presently demarcated Chinese societies in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Apart from the common history, the shared national literary heritage has been used as another cohesive force in pan-Chinese cinema as the filmmakers turned to the Chinese classical literature for inspiration. The two most popular works for recent film adaptation are *Romance of Three Kingdoms* of the 14th century and *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* of the 18th century. However, although the cultural familiarity in these cinematic versions serves as an ideal enticement for Chinese-speaking moviegoers, it has also evoked controversies or even disputes over the contemporary re-interpretations of these classical literary works. Therefore, on the one hand these adapted films have, to some extent, been successful in promoting the sense of a unified “cultural China”, while, on the other, they have also exposed the rifts still existing within it.

2. Reinterpreting National Cultural Heritage:

Film Adaptations of Chinese Classics

After returning from Hollywood and going back to Chinese-language filmmaking, Hong Kong director John Woo’s first production is the historical war epic *Red Cliff* (*Chi Bi*, 2008). This film is based on the story of the Battle of Red Cliff depicted in *Romance of Three Kingdoms*, one of the “Four Greatest Classical Novels” of ancient China. In fact, John Woo’s *Red Cliff* was the second pan-Chinese film adapted from this novel in 2008. The other film, *Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon* (*San Guo Zhi Jian Long Xie Jia*) by Daniel Lee Yan-Kong, follows another plotline focusing on the

legendary figure the so-called “Invincible General” Zhao Yun. The more recent adaptation is Alan Mak and Felix Chong’s *The Lost Bladesman* (*Guan Yun Chang*, 2011), based on the deified figure of Guan Yun Chang from *Three Kingdoms* who has been worshipped as the “Saint of War” (*Wu Sheng*) among Chinese people for a thousand years. However, the Hong Kong filmmakers’ enthusiasm about *Romance of Three Kingdoms* has brought about the controversies over contemporary reinterpretations of the classical novel and inspired reflection on the perennial Chinese predicament of division and unification.

Meanwhile, the commercial success of *Painted Skin* (*Hua Pi*, 2008, dir. Gordon Chan Kar-Seung), based on another Chinese classical novel *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* has kindled a spark of hope in developing a supernatural fantasy genre in China. Under the current film censor of the PRC, ghost-related stories are strictly prohibited on the silver screen as “superstitious poison.” In fact, the supernatural tales from the classic novel *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* were quite popular in pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema. Now in the era of pan-Chinese cinema, Hong Kong filmmakers cleverly replaced the ghost in the original story with the vixen spirit in the film as a compromise with the censorship. Since *Painted Skin* became the first officially PRC-sanctioned film based on *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, the Chinese-language film industry has witnessed a keenness for ghost-free supernatural fantasy films adapted from this novel.

Among the emerging pan-Chinese cinema, the popularity of classical Chinese literature for filmic adaption exemplified by *Romance of Three Kingdoms* and *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* has in a sense promoted the awareness of a “cultural China” based on shared national cultural heritage. However, the controversies and compromises

involved are noteworthy for understanding the regional/ideological differences of different Chinese societies.

2.1 *Romance of Three Kingdoms: Reflections On a Divided China*

A domain under heaven, after a long period of division, tends to unite; after a long period of union, tends to divide.

Romance of Three Kingdoms

by Luo Guanzhong (c. 1330 – 1400)

The classic Chinese novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, written in the 14th century, is based on the turbulent time in Chinese history from the Yellow Turban Rebellion in 184 which ended the rule of Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–220 A.D.), to the following Three Kingdoms Period (c.169-280) when the country was divided into three parts, and each of the three power blocs had attempted to reunite China under its sole rule. The novel was written in the early Ming Dynasty (c. 1368-1644) by Luo Guanzhong. As indicated by the opening remarks, the author has revealed a concern for China's thousand-year cyclical history between reunification and disintegration, which is still relevant to the present divisive situation of China.

Therefore, in the context of rising pan-Chinese cinema trying to connect and consolidate the different Chinese-speaking film markets, there has come a growing interest in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. First, based on the historical figures and events, there are altogether nearly a thousand characters and hundreds of battles portrayed in this novel in a legendary or mythical way, which makes it a rich resource for cinematic adaptation. Moreover, as many characters and battles are quite familiar to Chinese-speaking audiences all over the world, and even to audiences in Japan and

Korea which had been greatly influenced by ancient Chinese culture, these “Three Kingdoms”-related films tend to “market themselves” in terms of film promotion as the subject matter speaks to the targeted audiences equipped with this cultural knowledge.

Taking John Woo’s *Red Cliff* (2008) as an example, for the Chinese audiences only the two words of its title have not only signified the war epic genre, but also its main characters and plotline, as The Battle of Red Cliff was one of the most famous battles in Chinese history and historiography. Therefore, when the well-known story was re-enacted in the film *Red Cliff*, the marketing campaign for the film only needed to emphasise the big name of its director John Woo, its pan-Chinese star-studded cast, and, most of all, the budget of about US\$80 millions as the most expensive Chinese-language film ever made at the time of production. Accordingly, what concerns the audience in this film is not its fidelity to the original novel but its grand, epic tone through the state-of-the-art film technologies and the all-star cast.



Figure 7-9 Movie Poster of the Star-studded War Epic *Red Cliff* (2008, dir. John Woo)

However, on the other hand, the audience’s familiarity with the original story may also

influence their appreciation of the adapted film due to the personal expectations or the general stereotypes on the canonical novel. The U.S.-based Hong Kong filmmaker Terence Chang Chia-Chen, the producer of *Red Cliff* (and also of John Woo's Hollywood hits *Broken Arrow* and *Face/Off*) once expressed his regrets about *Red Cliff* for not being "an 'authentic' [Chinese] Three Kingdoms story" (as cited in Mei, 2008: n.pag.). According to Terence Chang (Ibid), originally he and John Woo had decided on this "Three Kingdoms"-themed project in the hope of searching for a sense of Chinese cultural belonging. However, due to the huge investment needed, the film financing has involved capital from several countries including Mainland China, U.S, Japan and Korea. As the investments are from all over the world, it means the film must be made for world audiences rather than just Chinese-speaking ones. With their working experiences in Hollywood, Terence Chang Chia-Chen (who had also co-produced John Woo's Hollywood hits *Broken Arrow* (1996) and *Face/Off* (1997) through his Lion Rock Productions) and John Woo have, however, at least succeeded in making *Red Cliff* a global blockbuster as a Chinese story packaged in Hollywood narrative and thematic style. The film was rewarded with a splendid commercial return in the Mainland market, which has broken the Chinese box office record set by *Titanic* in 1998. However, Daniel Lee Yan-Kong's *Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon* (2007) and Alan Mak and Felix Chong's *The Lost Bladesman* (2011) — the other two films loosely based the stories from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* by Hong Kong directors, have both received mixed reviews which affected their box office performances.

Unlike *Red Cliff*'s focus on one single battle, these two films both tried to express dense messages about their historical perspectives on China's reunification-division cycle through the life story of the household names: "Invincible General" Zhao Yun and "Saint of War" Guan Yu Chang respectively in *Resurrection of the Dragon* and *The Lost*

Bladesman. However, due to decades of separation under different ideological influences, the Hong Kong filmmakers' re-interpretations of the Chinese historical figures were misunderstood and impugned by the Mainland audience.

With a budget of 150 million RMB (about US\$23 million), *The Lost Bladesman* had garnered only a disappointing 160 million RMB (about US\$25 million) box office revenue in the Mainland market. After the revenue split with the distributors and cinema lines, the film was virtually an investment disaster for the production companies. Facing the unexpected failure, the producers claimed that they had suffered from hackers tampering with the film's online rating and unprecedentedly offered a reward of 100 thousand RMB (about US\$16 thousand) for finding the mastermind (Sina.com. June 2011). Indeed, the evaluation results on the movie fan websites such as Douban.com and Mytime.com (the Chinese equivalent of Rotten Tomatoes or IMBD) are important indicators of the Mainland Chinese audience's reception of a movie. The ratings within the first few days of a movie's opening are of paramount importance to its later box office performance. On April 28, 2011, the third day after its premier, the average online rating of *The Lost Bladesman* at Douban.com suddenly dropped from 7.6 to 5.9 (out of 10) in less than two hours and ended at 5.1, which is a fairly low rating. Since there has been no sufficient evidence to support the "conspiracy theory" accusation for this unusual phenomenon, the incident has only brought public attention to the vicious competition within the nascent Mainland film market. However, the unexpectedly low ratings of *The Lost Bladesman* and its disappointing box office performance have also, to some extent, reflected the Mainland audience's disapproval or dispute concerning the Hong Kong directors' re-interpretation of Guan Yun Chang, the apotheosised historical figure of the Three Kingdoms period.

According to the directors Alan Mak and Felix Chong (Mtime.com, March 2011), their

idea of making a movie on the Chinese “Saint of War” Guan Yun Chang came from their decades of experience of making Hong Kong police-crime movies. As the “Saint of War”, Guan Yun Chang is worshipped by both the Hong Kong Police and the local mafia – the triad. Therefore, statues or shrines of Guan Yun Chang have frequently appeared in Hong Kong police-crime movies. However, in the Hong Kong filmmakers’ northbound expedition on the Mainland market, the police-crime genre is discouraged by the PRC film censors and the historical martial arts films have become the new favorite of the market. Accordingly, Mak and Chong chose to make the film, *The Lost Bladesman*, loosely based on the widely-known Three Kingdoms figure Guan Yun Chang.



Figure 7.10 Movie Poster of *The Lost Bladesman* (Guan Yun Chang, 2011)

As indicated by the English title of the film, *The Lost Bladesman*, the film focuses on the protagonist’s confusion caused by the shaking of faith. The protagonist Guan was the sworn brother of Lord Liu Bei, leader of one of the three kingdoms. However, as in the film, Guan was held hostage by the rival Wei Kingdom of Cao Cao. Cao tried to

persuade him to surrender and Guan refused because of his firm belief that the Han Kingdom under the leadership of his Lord Liu Bei was the sole legitimate regime and should eventually reunite China. However, during his stay at Cao's camp, Guan witnessed the stability and prosperity of the Wei kingdom under the antagonist Cao Cao's ruling. Out of the wish to end the chaos caused by a decades-long civil war among the three separatist warlord regimes, Guan's loyalty to his sworn brother Lord Liu Bei and the Han Kingdom was contested.

The confusion interrogated in this film is self-referential regarding the Hong Kong directors' struggle in coming to terms with the PRC's regulation for the survival of their film industry, and even to the present situation of Hong Kong SAR with its growing dependence on Mainland China's economic dynamism. As I have discussed in Chapter Three, in Hong Kong gangster-packed comedy *Once a Gangster* (2010) (also directed by Felix Chong), the director expressed a similar concern. In *Once a Gangster*, through a police undercover agent's comments on the triad election, the director revealed his worries about the practical concession due to the economic interests, and his ideological confusion on whether the legitimacy of authoritarian leaders can be accepted solely because of the robust economy under their rule.

In *The Lost Bladesman*, by portraying the protagonist Guan Yun Chang as mired in such confusion, the directors Felix Chong and Alan Mak have actually subverted the holy icon of the Chinese "Saint of War", the symbol of bravery and loyalty. To justify their approach to Guan, the directors have given an alternative definition of the word "Yi" (loyalty) as "a kindhearted me." This explanation came from the Chinese character "Yi" in its traditional form which can be divided into two parts "lamb" (meaning "tender, gentle or kind" in Chinese) and "I/me." According to their understanding, "Yi"

(loyalty), which is widely regarded as the primary virtue of Guan, has actually accented the kind or gentle side of the “Saint of War.”

However, this semantic interpretation by Hong Kong filmmakers is based on the traditional Chinese characters abolished in the PRC since the 1950s, which are only circulated in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. In the Mainland simplified Chinese system, the character “Yi” (loyalty) is as simple as only three strokes (义), in contrast to its traditional form (義), which can be understood as a combination of two words. To most Mainland Chinese people who have only been taught the simplified Chinese character at school, such a complicated new definition of “Yi” as “a kindhearted me” has suffered from an uncanny kind of “cultural discount” (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988: 500) within the assumed “cultural China.” Moreover, as a result of cultural proximity/familiarity, to some audiences who are deeply influenced by the narrative of the original *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the filmic representation of the legendary heroic figure Guan Yun Chang as “a lost bladesman” is outrageous. What is also deemed as preposterous in the film is its embellishment of Cao Cao, the self-seeking and treacherous villain in the original novel.

On the whole, both the theme of confusion expressed in *The Lost Bladesman*, and the controversy over the film has caused, have shown that the tactic of adapting Chinese classics could be “a double-edged sword” for pan-Chinese film cinema. On the one hand, the shared Chinese cultural heritage may serve as the basis for common interest in certain subject matters, but on the other it may possibly turn out to expose the subtle rifts that lie between the separated Chinese territories. To mend the rifts so as to gradually get closer to the goal of a cultural integrated Chinese film market based on the pan-Chinese cinema, further communication and compromise are necessary among

the filmmakers, audiences and film censors. The recent films adapted from the ancient Chinese supernatural novel *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, and the consequent development of the Chinese fantasy genre, can well illustrate some progress that has so far been achieved in this direction.

2.2 *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*: Naissance of Chinese Fantasy Genre

Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio (*Liao Zhai Zhi Yi*) is a collection of about 500 supernatural tales (mostly about ghosts, spirits and demons) written by Pu Songling (c. 1640-1715) during the early Qing dynasty (c. 1644-1911). These stories have become popular and classic in Chinese literature mainly because of their satirical edge. These stories are usually romances between kind, trustworthy female ghosts and timid, selfish human male scholars with a righteous Taoist exorcist involved. Under the disguise of a supernatural genre, the author has, in fact, expressed a universal moral indignation against the injustice and corruption of the real society.

Since the 1960s, the exquisite stories from this ancient collection have inspired generations of Hong Kong filmmakers. For example, *Painted Skin*, one of the most widely known tales from *Strange Stories*, has been adapted into Hong Kong ghost-themed horror films almost every fifteen years from the 1960s to the 1990s, including *Painted Skin* (*Hua Pi*, 1965, dir. Pau Fong), *The Ghost Story* (*Gui Jiao Chun*, literally “Ghost Caterwauling”, 1979, dir. Li Han-Hsiang) and *Painted Skin* (*Hua Pi Zhi Ying Yang Fa Wang*, 1993, dir. King Hu).

As an unnamed pattern or simply a coincidence, a new version of *Painted Skin* was released in 2008 as a pan-Chinese blockbuster, directed by Gordon Chan Kar-Seung

from Hong Kong and starring a cast from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Singapore. Although in the film, the role of the female ghost was replaced by a vixen spirit due to the consideration of PRC censorship, as a rare instance of Chinese-language supernatural fantasy movie, the new *Painted Skin* was still very well received. It became a big hit in the Mainland market in 2008, only second to John Woo's *Red Cliff* in terms of box office performance. Consequently, it has led to a new trend of adapting *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* for Chinese supernatural fantasy genre with the release of *A Chinese Fairy Tale (Xin Qian Nv You Hun, dir. Wilson Yip Wai-Shun)* and *Mural (Hua Bi, dir. Gordon Chan Kar-Seung)* in 2011, and *Painted Skin II*, a sequel to the first one in 2012.



Figure 7.11&12 Movie posters for two supernatural fantasy movies by Gordon Chan Kar-Seung *Painted Skin* (2008) and *Mural* (2011) both based on *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*

What is special about the nascent Chinese supernatural fantasy genre based on *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* is that it is totally ghost-free. As I have discussed in Chapter Four, Hong Kong ghost/horror films are still being excluded from the Mainland due to their conflict with “the anti-superstition socialist ideology.” According to PRC film regulation, ghosts are strictly prohibited. Therefore, in order to adapt those classic ghost tales for the silver screen, the Hong Kong filmmakers flexibly replaced the ghost characters in the original stories with vixen spirits, chameleon goblins or other demons

(though it also does not make much sense why spirits and demons are not superstitious phenomena to PRC censors). For example, the newly released *A Chinese Fairy Tale* (2011) based on the short story *Nie Xiao Qian* from the collection *Strange Stories* was originally called *A Chinese Ghost Story* in its 1987 Hong Kong version directed by Ching Siu-tung.



Figure 7.13&14 Still from Hong Kong classic *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) starring Joey Wong (left) & Movie poster for its 2008 remake, pan-Chinese fantasy film *A Chinese Fairy Tale* (right)

Moreover, to transplant Hong Kong ghost/horror films to the Mainland market as pan-Chinese blockbuster, apart from removing the ghost characters, a more important tactic is to change the horror film into a romantic moral tale. In the film adaptations of the story *Painted Skin*, the horror scene of the female ghost taking off her human skin disguise used to be the climax in the previous mentioned three Hong Kong versions. However, in the 2008 pan-Chinese version of *Painted Skin*, this important scene addressing the movie title was only described with subtle treatment. The basis of the plotline is shifted from the horrific heart-eating ghost under the painted skin, to the love triangle between a married human couple and the vixen spirit (to replace the ghost) in

the form of a beautiful young lady. The new version can be classified as fantasy, romance, or action movie all at once, but definitely has nothing to do with the horror genre.

On the whole, through replacing the “superstitious” ghosts with fantasised spirits and eliminating the horror elements, the Hong Kong ghost/horror films have been transformed into a new genre—the pan-Chinese supernatural fantasy movie. This new type of movie has become popular in the Mainland first because of its rarity. As the film market is glutted with historical swordplay, war battle films loosely based on Chinese history, the totally fictitious supernatural tales have brought some diversity to the homogenised film market. Secondly, the creation of the Chinese-language fantasy film genre owes a debt to the inspiration of Hollywood fantasy blockbusters such as *Harry Potter* film series (2001-2011), *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy (2001-2003). As a new enterprise of pan-Chinese filmmakers, more efforts have been made to create glaring and dazzling magical effects rather than an original plotline. More importantly, as the fantasy movies depend heavily on state-of-art film technologies for CGI and post-production, reproducing the well-tested stories like *Painted Skin* and *Nie Xiao Qian* (for *A Chinese Ghost Story*) is a prudent approach to the new genre.

In fact, the 2008 *A Chinese Fairy Tale* has benefited greatly from the residual influence of the 1987 version of *A Chinese Ghost Story*. Although, like *Painted Skin*, the original story *Nie Xiao Qian* has generated several different film adaptations in Hong Kong cinema since the 1960s, the 1987 version produced by Tsui Hark is generally regarded as a representation of Hong Kong cinema at its peak. With the sudden suicide of its leading actor Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing in 2003, *A Chinese Ghost Story* has become a classic for Leslie Cheung’s fans. As a remake, *A Chinese Fairy Tale* has borrowed the

main music scores from the 1987 film to evoke a feeling of nostalgia. Moreover, the production team intentionally chose to release the remake in April 2011, the month of Leslie's eighth death anniversary. In the closing credit, words of "In memory of Mr. Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing" appear alongside the original movie theme song sung by Leslie Cheung himself. In the name of paying homage to the late Hong Kong actor/singer, the pan-Chinese fantasy movie *A Chinese Fairy Tale* has taken full advantage of the Hong Kong ghost/horror film legacy, although the elements of ghost and horror were both discarded for the sake of the Mainland market.



Figure 7.15 Still from *A Chinese Ghost Story* (1987) starring Leslie Cheung Kwok-Wing (1956-2003)

In general, the birth of the Chinese supernatural fantasy genre should be interpreted as progress in the development of pan-Chinese cinema, in terms of film diversity and mutual compromises made by Hong Kong filmmakers and the PRC censors. Although the efforts spent on invoking the shared Chinese cultural heritage in developing pan-Chinese cinema should still be appreciated, the compromises in adapting *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*, and the controversies brought about by films loosely based on *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, have otherwise manifested the social and ideological cleavage within a "cultural China." This trend may partially explain that at the 2009 HKFA, the two Chinese classic-based films *Red Cliff* and *Painted Skin* were both nominated for Best Film Award but failed to win it. The winner was another pan-Chinese production, the *kung fu* (fistfight) film *Ip Man* (2008, dir. Wilson Yip Wai-

Shun), a semi-biographical film very loosely based on the life of a martial art grandmaster Ip Man in the 1930s. This film received widespread acclaim from both critics and audiences, and has inspired a revitalisation of *kung fu* films among Hong Kong filmmakers. From 2009, for three consecutive years, the latest three Best Film Awards at HKFA have gone to *kung fu* films, namely: *Ip Man* (2008), *Bodyguards and Assassins* (*Shi Yue Wei Cheng*, 2009) and *Gallants* (*Da Lei Tai*, 2010). Crucial to this newly-reviving *kung fu* “craze” is the strong nationalistic sentiment in the form of anti-imperialist patriotism or anti-feudalist revolution. Compared to the approaches of screening an ancient China or re-interpreting the literary classics, it seems that marketing Chinese cultural nationalism is more effective in promoting a pan-Chinese solidarity because it defines “we” (Chinese) through identifying “others” (as imperialist invaders or oppressors).

3. Marketing Chinese Cultural Nationalism: the Reviving *Kung Fu* Craze

The concept of Chinese cultural nationalism has emerged primarily to differentiate itself from the Chinese political or state nationalism in the official discourse of the PRC. Although “there is enough overlap between cultural nationalism and state nationalism to make a clear-cut distinction unfeasible” (Guo, 2004: 18), fundamentally what Chinese cultural nationalism is against is the ideology or hegemony of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and “its monopoly on the right to name the nation” if not state nationalism as a whole (Ibid: 4). As mentioned in the Introduction, this kind of depoliticised cultural nationalism, which identifies “with cultural China without equating it with the state” (Lo, 2006: 38), has long been recognised as “a significant source of inspiration for the Hong Kong film industry, allowing it to capture the hearts of diasporic Chinese worldwide” (Ibid). In his discussion of Hong Kong martial arts

films by Tsui Hark in the 1990s such as *Once Upon a Time in China* series (*Huang Fei Hong*, 1991-1997), Stephen Teo also pointed out that these films convey “an abstract kind of cultural nationalism” not based on loyalty to any particular regime or political ideology (Teo, 1997: 111-112, as cited in Lo, 2006: 38). More importantly, as Kwai-Cheung Lo (2006: 46) further elaborated, this on-screen nationalism “empties itself of political substance in that it does not pose any real threat to existing regimes.”

In this respect, Chinese cultural nationalism, which is also promoted in the recent pan-Chinese *kung fu* films, is a beneficial supplement to PRC state nationalism in the present context of “one country, two systems” and “one China, different interpretations.” The anti-Japanese patriotism (*Ip Man*) and the association with Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (1866-1925), the “Father of the Nation” acknowledged by both the PRC and the ROC (*Bodyguards and Assassins*), are both evidence of invoking cultural nationalism to hold together the three Chinese societies from both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The leading actor Donnie Yen in both of these two films (also in the previously discussed *Painted Skin* and *The Lost Bladesman*) has become the new *kung fu* icon, after Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li. As mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter, Donnie Yen’s pan-Chinese background as a Mainland-born, Hong Kong-based Chinese-American has reinforced the de-territorialised “pan-Chinese” feature of the recent martial arts films. Meanwhile, against the general trend of making big-budget pan-Chinese blockbusters in Mandarin, the low-budget Cantonese *kung fu* film *Gallants* (2010) appeared as a “dark horse” at the 2011 HKFA, and directed the audience’s attention back to the origin of *kung fu* craze in 1970s Hong Kong.

3.1 Donnie Yen: the New *Kung Fu* Icon of Pan-Chinese Cinema

As mentioned above, Donnie Yen was in the leading role of most major martial arts

films released since 2008. Born in mainland China, he moved to Hong Kong with his family when he was only two, and then to the U.S. several years later. Born to a martial arts master family, he started to learn *kung fu* from his mother since his childhood and, later, was sent back to mainland China by his parents for martial arts training. In his early career as a *kung fu* actor, Donnie Yen has long been overshadowed by his predecessor Jet Li and had twice played Jet Li's onscreen opponent — in *Once Upon a Time in China 2* (1992), and *Hero* (2002). It was not until the 2008 film *Ip Man* that Donnie Yen established his status as the new *kung fu* icon and inspired a revitalisation of Chinese period *kung fu* films.

In history, the martial arts master Ip Man (a.k.a. Yip Man) (1893-1972) had gained his reputation for promoting *Wing Chun* (a type of Chinese *kung fu*) through his Hong Kong-based martial arts school (later named the Hong Kong Wing Chun Athletic Association). The world famous *kung fu* superstar Bruce Lee was one of Ip Man's students, and Lee's stardom greatly increased Ip's fame. However, when making a blockbuster movie on Ip Man's humdrum life as a martial arts master, director Wilson Yip Wai-Shun spiced up the story through fictionalised legends of Ip Man defeating foreign fighters to uphold the dignity Chinese people in the face of foreign invasion and oppression. *Ip Man* (2008) focuses on his early life in Foshan city, Guangdong province in the late 1930s to early 1940s against the background of the Japanese occupation of China during World War II. The film ends with Ip Man's victory over Japanese military officers in public combat, but he had to flee to Hong Kong, which allows the protagonist to continue to fight against the British colonisers in the sequel *Ip Man 2* (2010).



Figure 7.16 Still from *Ip Man* (2008): Ip Man defeating ten Japanese fighters all by himself

Both episodes of *Ip Man* have followed the same three-phase narrative formula: first the protagonist is living a peaceful life as a famous *kung fu* master until one day another Chinese martial artist comes to challenge him. Then they start a dazzling match and the protagonist is surely slightly superior in his skills. When they become friends with each other and return to peace, the foreign invaders or oppressors come to provoke the Chinese people. Finally, the climax comes when the protagonist engages in an ultimate duel with the foreign fighters and his victory is necessary for perfect closure of the legend of the Chinese national hero. Through this simple three-phase structure, the films have clearly conveyed a nationalistic message that all Chinese, despite their domestic disputes, should unite to fight against foreign aggression. This “cultural nationalism” has cleverly avoided any political orientation in the context of China’s division predicament, and has successfully diverted the attention from the internal quarrels onto the more important issue of national integrity and dignity. In this way, the cultural nationalism in pan-Chinese *kung fu* movies can fulfill their mission as a supplement to the PRC state nationalism.

In fact, this marketing strategy, by highlighting the anti-imperialist patriotism in pan-Chinese period *kung fu* movies, was not originated by Wilson Yip’s *Ip Man*. It had already been employed in Jet Li’s 2006 film *Fearless* (*Huo Yuan Jia*, dir. Ronny Yu

Yan-Tai). This film is based on the real life of a much more famous martial artist Huo Yuan Jia (1868-1910), who had co-founded the Chin Woo Athletic Association, a martial arts school in Shanghai. At the time when a large part of Shanghai was divided up into different “foreign concessions,” Master Huo was widely respected for winning several publicised matches against Japanese and European fighters or boxers. His sudden death at the age of 42 was reportedly caused by arsenic poisoning involving a Japanese doctor. Hou’s legendary but tragic life story has been adapted for several television series in Hong Kong since the 1980s, and Jet Li’s 2006 *Fearless* was the most recent one.



Figure 7.17-20

(Upper left) Still from *Fearless* (2006) Huo (in white, by Jet Li) against a Japanese fighter

(Upper right) Still from *Ip Man* (2008) Ip Man (in black, by Donnie Yen) against a Japanese fighter

(Bottom left) Still from *Fearless* (2006) Huo against a European boxer

(Bottom right) Still from *Ip Man 2* (2010) Ip Man against a British boxer

It is not only *kung fu* stars like Donnie Yen and Jet Li who made films emphasizing anti-Japanese (or other invaders) sentiment. Their predecessors Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan had also risen to stardom through nationalistic *kung fu* films. One thing in

common among these four Chinese *kung fu* superstars is that they had all played the role of Chen Zhen, a fictional disciple of the above-mentioned historical figure Huo Yuan Jia at his Chin Woo Athletic Association (widely known as “Jing Wu Men” or “Jing Wu School”). First, it was Bruce Lee who introduced this nationalistic, masculine image of Chen Zhen in his *Fist of Fury* (*Jing Wu Men*, a.k.a. *The Chinese Connection*, 1972). This film starts with Chen Zhen’s return to Jing Wu Men on the news of Master Huo’s sudden death. While Chen Zhen is trying to find out the truth about the secret poisoning of Master Huo, the Japanese come to present a sign which reads “Sick Men of East Asia.” Facing the insult, Chen Zhen beats up the enemies who have insulted him and the nation and smashes the sign with a flying kick. With the inspiring message that “the Chinese people are no longer weaklings”, this film impressed the Chinese audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan and other Chinese diasporas, and also inspired non-Chinese audiences in Asian countries who had shared the miserable experiences of being oppressed by Japanese jingoism.

Soon after Bruce Lee’s premature death in 1973, Jackie Chan made *New Fist of Fury* (*Xin Jing Wu Men*, 1976) to carry on Bruce Lee’s legacy. In the early 1990s, Jet Li started to be recognised as the successor of Jackie Chan with his performance in Tsui Hark’s *Once Upon a Time in China* series (1991-1997), starring in the third “Chen Zhen”-themed film *Fist of Legend* (*Jing Wu Ying Xiong*, literally: *Hero of Jing Wu School*, 1994). This film, with its anti-Japanese element, “helps solidify Li’s participation in a stream of masculinist Chinese imagery that connects him to Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan” (Desser, 2005: 290). In his article *Fist of Legend: Constructing Chinese Identity in the Hong Kong Cinema*, David Desser (2005: 291) noted that, “The clear association of Lee, Chan and Li with Chinese martial arts and anti-Japanese or other anti-imperialist causes is a major reason for their stardom.”



Figure 7.21-24 four versions of “*Jing Wu Men*” story about the fictional hero Chen Zhen
 Respectively by Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li and Donnie Yen (left to right)

Just like a required ritual to crown as the next *kung fu* icon, a new version *Legend of the Fist: the Return of Chen Zhen (Jing Wu Feng Yun)* starring Donnie Yen was released in 2010. Unlike the previous three Hong Kong productions, which had never been officially introduced into theatres in the PRC, Donnie Yen’s version is the first “Chen Zhen” film made with both mainland China and Taiwan involvement. Desser (2005: 282) once argued that the earlier three “Chen Zhen”-themed films produced in British colonial Hong Kong had served as “a means not only to assert their [Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li] stardom, but also to claim a kind of Chinese identity, an identity that comes to fruition in juxtaposition with the Japanese.” In the “one country, two systems” era, Desser’s argument is also applicable to the pan-Chinese version of “Chen Zhen” film starring Donnie Yen.

Along with the assertion of Donnie Yen’s stardom as the new *kung fu* icon of the rising pan-Chinese cinema, it seems that Hong Kong cinema is gradually losing its position as a global hub of martial arts movies. However, so far the pan-Chinese production of martial arts films still relies heavily on Hong Kong filmmakers’ expertise and experiences. Hence, besides their efforts at playing to pan-Chinese cultural nationalistic sentiment for the sake of Mainland market, these Hong Kong filmmakers (including

those presently Beijing-based) are still trying hard to retain and even highlight the Hong Kong factors in their works. In other words, they are trying to balance the pan-Chinese cultural identity and the identity of Hong Kong in their transition to pan-Chinese production model. The aforementioned *kung fu* blockbuster *Bodyguards and Assassins* (also starring Donnie Yen) produced by Peter Chan Ho-sun is a good example of resolving this dilemma. Later, the low-budget nostalgic *kung fu* film *Gallants* seems to have brought a spark of hope to the resurgence of Hong Kong *kung fu* film in the general trend of pan-Chinese production.

3.2 Final Curtain or Resurgence? Hong Kong's Presence in Pan-Chinese *Kung Fu* Films

As previously mentioned, in the new *kung fu* craze of the pan-Chinese production era, for three consecutive years since 2009, *kung fu* films have garnered the three Best Film Awards at the HKFA. Different from the overemphasis on Chinese nationalism against the Japanese invasion demonstrated in the 2009 winner *Ip Man* (2008), the other two award-winning films *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009) and *Gallants (Da Lei Tai)*, (2010) have manifested a genuine concern for Hong Kong's position in the grand narrative of Chinese cultural nationalism.

Produced by Peter Chan Ho-sun, *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009, dir. Teddy Chan Tak Sum) was his second major pan-Chinese production after the success of the aforementioned *The Warlords* (2007). Continuing the strategy of making use of Chinese history to secure the pan-Chinese markets used in *The Warlords*, this time Peter Chan boldly "invented" history to elevate the simple action-packed plotline in *Bodyguards and Assassins*. As indicated by its English title, the film features mainly the breathtaking fighting scenes between the bodyguards and the assassins. However, in

order to put the brutal fights into service for the righteous cause of the Chinese nation, the film assigned a great mission to the fictional story set in British Hong Kong in 1905 — to protect Dr. Sun Yat-sun, the leader of 1911 Revolution (a.k.a. Xinhai Revolution) which overthrew the Qing Dynasty and 4,000 years of monarchy in China.

Although it is a totally fictionalised story, the mere mention of the name of the “Father of the Nation”, Sun Yat-sen, in the film struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of Chinese audiences across the Taiwan Strait. When screened in Japan, where Dr. Sun Yat-sen had spent years in exile and founded his Chinese Revolutionary Alliance, the film adapted a more explicit and sensational Japanese title, “孫文の義士団,” which literally means “Revolutionary Martyrs of Dr. Sun Yat-sun.” Like other pan-Chinese *kung fu* blockbusters like *Ip Man* and *Fearless*, Peter Chan’s *Bodyguards and Assassins* has given full play to the culturally nationalist packaging while cannily eschewing this patriotic tendency which may affect its marketing outside Greater China.

More importantly, through the invented association between Sun Yat-sen and Hong Kong, *Bodyguards and Assassins* manifested an effort at restoring the glow of Hong Kong *kung fu* films through pan-Chinese production model. This film was released in the year 2009, which was the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PRC. In that year, the most eye-catching film in Mainland China was *The Founding of a Republic* commissioned to mark the occasion. Unlike the usual political propaganda films made in the PRC, *The Founding of a Republic* is more of a market-oriented entertaining historical drama. With a pan-Chinese cast of over 150 movie stars and prestigious film directors including Jackie Chan and John Woo, this film was in fact fairly well received among the audiences as they vividly described the movie-going experience as just “counting the stars.” Like *The Founding of a Republic*, the commercially packaged

revolution-themed movie, *Bodyguards and Assassins* has also featured the appeal of an all-star cast from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. Released almost at the same time, as a revolution-theme packaged commercial film *Bodyguards and Assassins* was often joked about as the Hong Kong version of “The Founding of a Republic,” but another one— the Republic of China (ROC) founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1912.

However, rather than commemorating the founding of any Chinese regime, *Bodyguards and Assassins* is, in fact, a film about the city-state Hong Kong. The Chinese title *Shi Yu Wei Cheng* (literally: “Besieged City in October”) originated from another name of Hong Kong – “the City of Victoria” (as its translation in Chinese is “Wei Cheng”, the homonym of “besieged city” in Chinese). In order to reproduce the image of Hong Kong in 1905, the production company has spent over RMB40 million (about US\$6.25 million) to build a gigantic set for this movie. The movie set was built in Shanghai, occupying an area of about 10 million square meters.

Under the device of escorting Dr. Sun Yat-sen to his destination, the basis of the film lies in the intense street fighting which brings the audience back to Central, Hong Kong one hundred years ago. In this respect, *Bodyguards and Assassins* is, in fact, a nostalgic search for Hong Kong identity in historiography, even though the history was invented.

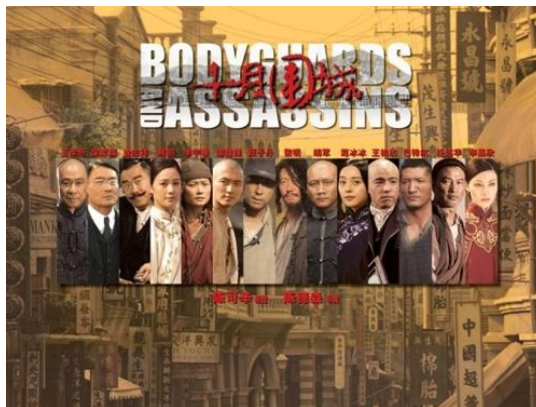


Figure 7.25 Poster of *Bodyguards and Assassins* (2009):

The star-studded cast on the background of an old image of Hong Kong

The basic plotline of uniting several bodyguards from all walks of life to protect an important figure has already been used in Hong Kong *kung fu* films in the mid- 1980s. Directed by “the Godfather of Hong Kong martial arts films”, Chang Cheh (1923-2002), the film *Shanghai 13* (*Shanghai Tan Shi San Tai Bao*, 1984) also told a similar story set in the 1930s as thirteen patriots united in a mission of escorting an anti-Japanese leader from Shanghai. Like *Bodyguards and Assassins*, this film was also an all-star extravaganza of its time, with over a dozen of Hong Kong’s top *kung fu* stars of the 1970s, including Chen Kuan Tai, David Chiang, and Ti Lung. Moreover, *Shanghai 13* is also composed of a series of fighting scenes with no substantial plot development.

Thematically, *Shanghai 13* is a quintessential example of Hong Kong *kung fu* films which “claim a kind of Chinese identity, an identity that comes to fruition in juxtaposition with the Japanese” (Desser, 2005: 282), as I discussed earlier. Produced in the mid-1980s, when the martial arts films were widely recognised as the trademark of Hong Kong cinema, *Shanghai 13* was set outside Hong Kong without any risk of being confused with the films from mainland China. However, in the time when *Bodyguards and Assassins* was produced, Hong Kong cinema shifted focus onto the Mainland market, while the commercialisation of mainland Chinese cinema blurred the boundary between the two regional cinemas. In the era of rising pan-Chinese cinema, to the Beijing-based or oriented Hong Kong filmmakers the emphasis of the “Hong Kong” elements has become a way to mark their existence and to uphold their identity. In the case of *Bodyguards and Assassins*, the obsession with the Hong Kong setting is an illustration of Hong Kong cinema’s desperate efforts to rediscover its roots in history, even if that history is invented or garbled. The same efforts were also demonstrated in

the 2011 HKFA Best Film winner *Gallants*, a more straightforward nostalgic account of the glorious past of Hong Kong (cinema) through its tribute to Hong Kong *kung fu* films of the 1960s and 1970s.

The *kung fu* comedy film *Gallants* has an unexpected turn of fortune at the 2011 HKFA. It was the third film directed by director Derek Kwok Chi-kin and the debut of co-director Clement Cheng Si-Kit. Among all five films nominated for Best Film Awards, *Gallants* was one with the lowest budget and the least famous directors. The other four nominated films included *kung fu* film *Ip Man 2* (the sequel to the previous year winner), two extravagant historical *wu xia* films — *Reign of Assassins* (*Jian Yu*) produced by John Woo and *Detective Dee And The Mystery Of The Phantom Flame* (*Shen Tan Di Ren Jie Zhi Tong Tian Di Guo*) directed by Tsui Hark, and one modern action/crime film *The Stool Pigeon* (*Xian Ren*). The appearance of *Gallants* among these pan-Chinese blockbusters looks conspicuously odd.



Figure 7.26 Poster for *Gallants* (2010) in the style of the 1960's

Secondly, unlike the other four nominated films, *Gallants* was not a theatrical hit at all. Although it had also been introduced to the Mainland market as a Hong Kong-Mainland

coproduction, *Gallants* had a very modest box office performance. Besides the Chinese audience's general preference for high budget blockbusters, the major reason for *Gallants*' poor performance lies in that the film cast was mainly made up of senior Hong Kong *kung fu* stars from the 1960s, including Chen Kuan-tai (as in the above mentioned *Shanghai 13*), Leung Siu-lung, and Teddy Robin. Although Teddy Robin had won the Best Actor Award for *Gallants*, to the Mainland audience this cast is unfamiliar and unappealing. Moreover, *Gallants* was the first co-produced film screened all over Mainland China in its original Cantonese version, rather than dubbed into Mandarin. Although the Cantonese version works better in communicating the vernacular gags in the film, it may have affected the appreciation of audiences in non-Cantonese speaking areas of China. Therefore, on the news of *Gallants* winning the Best Film Award, some Mainland movie theaters had to re-screen the film one year after its premiere in March 2010.

However, *Gallants* impressed the jury of HKFA with its nostalgic homage to old Hong Kong *kung fu* films and its advocacy of an “unflinching” Hong Kong spirit. It is noteworthy that the theme song of *Gallants*, a Cantonese-English rap called “Fight to Win,” is adapted from the theme song of the early 1980's Hong Kong television series *Hou Yuan Jia*, (about the respected Chinese martial artist which I have mentioned earlier in this chapter). As one of the first Hong Kong television series introduced into the Mainland shortly after the PRC's reform and opening up policy, *Huo Yuan Jia* and its inspiring theme song “The Great Wall Will Be Standing Forever” was known by most Chinese. However, in case of the film *Gallants*, the fearless spirits embodied in the anti-Japanese nationalism of the original song has been transformed into a song of encouragement for the languishing Hong Kong cinema.

Primarily, the prominent presence of “Hong Kong” in these two award-winning *kung fu* films, *Bodyguards and Assassins* and *Gallants*, bespeaks the significant role that Hong Kong filmmakers are playing in the growing pan-Chinese cinema, and their efforts to carry on the legacy of Hong Kong (*kung fu*) cinema. However, it would be premature to conclude that there are major implications of this phenomenon. On one hand, it could be seen as merely the final curtain of Hong Kong (*kung fu*) cinema in the overwhelming trend of pan-Chinese production. On the other, it is not entirely impossible for the two films (especially *Gallants*) to be the start of a potential resurgence of Hong Kong (martial arts) cinema in the form of a mid-budget dialect cinema based on the Hong Kong domestic market, the Cantonese-speaking audiences in the Mainland and all over the world.

As I have mentioned earlier, *Gallants* is the first Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced film (and so far the only one) to be screened in its original Cantonese version for the whole Mainland market. Although Cantonese is incomprehensible to most Mainland audiences outside Guangdong and parts of Guangxi provinces, the more than 100 million Cantonese-speaking populations in the Mainland, together with the 7 million local population in Hong Kong, is a sufficient potential market for Hong Kong-based Cantonese films. In fact, early in 2008, the fifth supplement to the CEPA has removed quota restrictions on the distribution and screening of Cantonese versions of Hong Kong films in Guangdong Province. On the advent of this new policy, Laikwan Pang (2010a: 142) immediately pointed out that “[w]ith the support of recent policy, Hong Kong films with distinct local flavor might make an impressive comeback.” However, as “[t]he use of dialect in the mass media has always been a political matter, particularly in China” (Ibid: 143), Pang was not entirely optimistic about the “Hong Kong cinema as a dialect cinema” idea. She noted at the end of her article that:

This minor film policy might also be a first step toward China's acceptance of an alternative cultural industry, an indirect recognition of a cultural alterity within the national self Separatism has always been a most delicate political matter in the PRC, and the ways that China and Hong Kong approach this new cultural synergism could prove to be productive but contentious.

(Pang, 2010: 143)

This argument leads us back to the initial consideration of this chapter which was about the “reunification”/ “unity” issue. In fact, the Chinese notion of “Grand Unity” (*Da Yi Tong*) is not only applicable in the sense of national sovereignty, namely the “return of Hong Kong and Macao” and “reunification with Taiwan.” More profoundly, it is a “unity” in terms of cultural homogeneity/hegemony under the centralised Party-State power in the context of the current “one country, two systems” Hong Kong-PRC relationship. As opposed to the rising pan-Chinese cinema we have discussed in this chapter, the development of a dialect cinema – “a cultural alterity” (Pang, 2010: 143) – could be regarded as a potential threat to “cultural unity” by the PRC under a one-party system. At this “two systems” transitional stage towards the “one country, one system” political ambition, it is not quite possible for a large-scale rejuvenation of Cantonese films for the sake of a Hong Kong or “Cantonese” cultural identity is not currently possible. Therefore, *Gallants* may well end up being a special, if not unique, case in the history of the HKFA and Hong Kong cinema, although we still need to wait for future films and studies to confirm that prediction.

Conclusion:

As the last part of the main body of my thesis, this chapter has examined the trend of Hong Kong martial arts films becoming the ever-growing pan-Chinese production in the form of high-budget Chinese blockbusters. By invoking the notion of “pan-Chinese cinema”, I contend that the newly-emergent and increasingly popular film co-production mode among different Chinese-language cinemas has formed a new de-territorialised pan-Chinese cinema. In the effort to connect and consolidate the Chinese film markets in separated Chinese territories, these pan-Chinese films have employed a strategy of screening an ancient China as a bygone/imagined common homeland for all Chinese people. In addition, highlighting the shared Chinese cultural heritage through adapting the Chinese classics into action-packed blockbusters is another frequent strategy among pan-Chinese productions. Occasionally, this tactic was contested because the regional social-cultural differences between Chinese people separated in “two systems” hold greatly different understandings regarding their shared cultural legacy. Above these two options, the *kung fu* films packaged with anti-Japanese, anti-imperialist nationalism have so far proven the most effective device to play to a pan-Chinese identity.

However, in the process of Hong Kong martial arts films’ transformation into pan-Chinese cinema, the concern about the future of Hong Kong cinema arises. As pan-Chinese production becomes the overwhelming trend supported by the expanding Mainland market, would Hong Kong cinema retreat to its domestic market confined to only low-budget “pornviolence” Category III films as I have discussed in Chapter Three, or could it rejuvenate itself as a regional dialect cinema based on the Cantonese-speaking audiences in Hong Kong, Guangdong and Guangxi provinces of Mainland China? I maintain that, as promoting Chinese national unity is a socio-political

imperative of the “one country, two systems” era, an unprecedented development of a dialect cinema with a heavy regional focus is not likely to take place on the Mainland. The fact that the prosperous pan-Chinese cinema with a “cultural unity” implication is promoted and supported by the government apparatus SARFT, may be considered as an implicit negation of “Hong Kong cinema as a dialect cinema.”

Of course, all these predictions or anticipations depend on the future co-existence of Hong Kong and the PRC under the “one country, two systems” model and, more importantly, the PRC’s attitude towards furthering its economic reform into the cultural, and even political domains, which I will further elaborate on in the concluding chapter.

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Appendix

A. FILMOGRAPHY:

English Title	Year	Pinyin Title	Chinese Title	Director
<i>2000 AD</i>	2000	<i>Gong Yuan 2000</i>	公元 2000	Gordon Chan Kar-Seung
<i>2046</i>	2004	<i>2046</i>	2046	Wong Kar-wai
<i>A Battle of Wits</i>	2006	<i>Mo Gong</i>	墨攻	Jacob Cheung
<i>A Better Tomorrow</i>	1986	<i>Ying Xiong Ben Se</i>	英雄本色	John Woo Yu-Sen
<i>A Better Tomorrow 3: Love & Death in Saigon</i>	1989	<i>Ying Xiong Ben Se III: Xi Yang Zhi Ge</i>	英雄本色 3: 夕阳之歌	John Woo Yu-Sen
<i>A Chinese Fairy Tale</i>	2011	<i>Qian Nv You Hun</i>	倩女幽魂	Wilson Yip Wai-Shun
<i>A Chinese Ghost Story</i>	1987	<i>Qian Nv You Hun</i>	倩女幽魂	Ching Siu-tung
<i>A Chinese Odyssey</i>	1994	<i>Da Hua Xi You</i>	大话西游	Jeffrey Lau Chun-Wai & Stephen Chow Sing-Chi
<i>A City of Sadness</i>	1989	<i>Bei Qing Cheng Shi</i>	悲情城市	Hou Hsiao-hsien
<i>A Man Called Hero</i>	1999	<i>Zhong Hua Ying Xiong</i>	中华英雄	Andrew Lau Wai-Keung
<i>A Sigh</i>	2000	<i>Yi Sheng Tan Xi</i>	一声叹息	Feng Xiao-Gang
<i>About Jane and Sam</i>	1999	<i>Zhen Xin Hua</i>	真心话	Derek Yee Tung-Sing
<i>After This Our Exile</i>	2006	<i>Fu Zi</i>	父子	Patrick Tam Kar Ming
<i>All About Love</i>	2010	<i>De Xian Chao Fan</i>	得闲炒饭	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Ashes of Time</i>	1994	<i>Dong Xie Xi Du</i>	东邪西毒	Wong Kar-wai
<i>Ashes of Time Redux</i>	2008	<i>Dong Xie Xi Du: Zhong Ji Ban</i>	东邪西毒: 终极版	Wong Kar-wai
<i>At the end of Daybreak</i>	2009	<i>Xin Mo</i>	心魔	<i>Ho Yuhang</i>
<i>Ballistic</i>	2008	<i>Dan Dao</i>	弹道	Lawrence Ah Mon (a.k.a. Lawrence Lau Kwok Cheong)
<i>Be With Me</i>	2005	<i>He Wo Zai Yi Qi</i>	和我在一起	Eric Khoo
<i>Besieged City</i>	2008	<i>Wei Cheng</i>	围城	Lawrence Ah Mon (a.k.a. Lawrence Lau Kwok Cheong)
<i>Black Gold</i> (a.k.a. <i>Island of Greed</i>)	1997	<i>Hei Jin</i>	黑金	Michael Mak Dong-kit
<i>Blood Brothers</i> (a.k.a. <i>Chinese Vengeance; Dynasty of Blood</i>)	1973	<i>Ci Ma</i>	刺马	Chang Cheh
<i>Boat People</i>	1982	<i>Tou Ben Nu Hai</i>	投奔怒海	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Bodyguards and Assassins</i>	2009	<i>Shi Yue Wei Cheng</i>	十月围城	Teddy Chan Tak Sum
<i>Broken Arrow</i>	1996	<i>Duan Jian</i>	断箭	John Woo Yu-Sen
<i>Burning of the Imperial Palace</i>	1983	<i>Hu Shao Yuan Ming Yuan</i>	火烧圆明园	Li Han Hsiang
<i>Casino</i>	1998	<i>Hao Jiang Feng Yun</i>	濠江风云	Billy Tang Hin-Shing
<i>Cell Phone</i>	2004	<i>Shou Ji</i>	手机	Feng Xiao-Gang

<i>Centre Stage</i> (a.k.a. <i>Actress</i> , or <i>Yuen Ling-yuk</i>)	1992	<i>Ruan Ling Yu</i>	阮玲玉	Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang
<i>C'est la vie, mon ch éri</i>	1993	<i>Xin Bu Liao Qing</i>	新不了情	Derek Yee Tung-Shing
<i>City on Fire</i>	1987	<i>Long Hu Feng Yun</i> ,	龙虎风云	Ringo Lam Ling-Tung
<i>CJ7</i>	2008	<i>Chang Jiang Qi Hao</i>	长江七号	Stephen Chow Sing-Chi
<i>Comrades, Almost a Love Story</i>	1996	<i>Tian Mi Mi</i>	甜蜜蜜	Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>Crossing Hennessy</i>	2010	<i>Yue Man Xuan Ni Shi</i>	月满轩尼诗	Ivy Ho Sai-Hong
<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden dragon</i>	2000	<i>Wo Hu Cang Long</i>	卧虎藏龙	Ang Lee
<i>Curse of the Golden Flowers</i>	2006	<i>Man Cheng Jin Dai Huang Jin Jia</i> ,	满城尽带黄金甲	Zhang Yimou
<i>Detective Dee And The Mystery Of The Phantom Flame</i>	2010	<i>Di Ren Jie Zhi Tong Tian Di Guo</i>	狄仁杰之通天帝国	Tsui Hark
<i>Dragon Inn</i> (a.k.a. <i>New Dragon Gate Inn</i>)	1992	<i>Xin Long Men Ke Zhan</i>	新龙门客栈	Raymond Lee (produced by Tsui Hark)
<i>Dream Home</i>	2010	<i>Wei Duo Li Ya Yi Hao</i>	维多利亚壹号	Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung
<i>Dumplings</i>	2004	<i>Jiao Zi</i>	饺子	Fruit Chan Gor
<i>Durian Durian</i>	2000	<i>Liu Lian Piao Piao</i>	榴莲飘飘	Fruit Chan Gor
<i>Echoes of the Rainbow</i>	2010	<i>Sui Yue Shen Tou</i>	岁月神偷	Alex Law Kai-Yui
<i>Election</i> (a.k.a. <i>Triad Election</i>)	2005	<i>Hei She Hui</i> (Mainland title: <i>Long Cheng Sui Yue</i>)	黑社会 (内地片名: 龙城岁月)	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>Election 2: Value Peace Most</i>	2006	<i>Hei She Hui 2: Yi He Wei Gui</i>	黑社会 2: 以和为贵	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>Enter the Dragon</i>	1973	<i>Long Zheng Hu Dou</i> ,	龙争虎斗	Robert Clouse
<i>Everlasting Regret</i>	2005	<i>Chang Heng Ge</i>	长恨歌	Stanley Kwan
<i>Exiled</i>	2006	<i>Fang Zhu</i>	放逐	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>Face/Off</i>	1997	<i>Bian Lian</i>	变脸	John Woo
<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	1993	<i>Ba Wang Bie Ji</i>	霸王别姬	Chen Kaige
<i>Fearless</i>	2006	<i>Huo Yuan Jia</i>	霍元甲	Ronny Yu Yan-Tai
<i>Fight and Love with a Terracotta Warrior</i> (a.k.a. <i>A Terra-Cotta Warrior</i>)	1989	<i>Gu Jin Da Zhan Qin Yong Qing</i>	古今大战秦俑情	Ching Siu-tung (produced by Tsui Hark)
<i>Fist of Fury</i> (a.k.a. <i>The Chinese Connection</i>)	1972	<i>Jin Wu Men</i>	精武门	Lo Wei
<i>Fist of Legend</i>	1994	<i>Jing Wu Ying Xiong</i>	精武英雄	Gordon Chan Kar-Seung

<i>Fu Bo</i>	2003	<i>Fu Bo</i>	福伯	Wong Ching-Po
<i>Fulltime Killer</i>	2001	<i>Quan Zhi Sha Shou</i>	全职杀手	Johnnie To Kei-Fung & Wai Ka-Fai
<i>Gallants</i>	2010	<i>Da Lei Tai</i>	打擂台	Derek Kwok Jing-hung & Clement Cheng
<i>Girl\$</i>	2010	<i>Nan Nan</i>	囡囡	Kenneth Bi
<i>Gladiator</i>	2000	<i>Jue Dou Shi</i>	角斗士	Ridley Scott
<i>God of Gamblers</i>	1989	<i>Du Sheng</i>	赌神	Wong Jing,
<i>God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai</i>	1991	<i>Du Xia II Zhi Shanghai Tan Du Sheng</i>	赌侠 2 之上海滩赌圣	Wong Jing
<i>Golden Chicken sequel</i>	2002-2003	<i>Jin Ji</i>	金鸡	Samson Chiu Leung Chun
<i>Harry Potter series</i>	2001-2011	<i>Ha Li Bo Te Xi Lie</i>	哈里波特系列	David Heyman (producer)
<i>Her Fatal Ways</i>	1990	<i>Biao Jie Ni Hao Ye</i>	表姐你好嘢	Alfred Cheung Kin Ting
<i>Hero</i>	2002	<i>Ying Xiong</i>	英雄	Zhang Yimou
<i>Hollywood, Hong Kong</i>	2001	<i>Xiang Gang You Ge Hao Lian Wu</i>	香港有个好莱坞	Fruit Chan Gor
<i>House of Flying Daggers</i>	2004	<i>Shi Mian Mai Fu</i>	十面埋伏	Zhang Yimou
<i>In the Mood for Love</i>	2000	<i>Hua Yang Nian Hua</i>	花样年华	Wong Kar-wai
<i>Independence Day</i>	1996	<i>Du Li Ri</i>	独立日	Roland Emmerich
<i>Infernal Affairs trilogy</i>	2002-2003	<i>Wu Jian Dao (1-3)</i>	无间道(1-3)	Andrew Lau Wai-keung & Alan Mak Siu-fai
<i>Intruder</i>	1997	<i>Kong Bu Ji</i>	恐怖鸡	Sammy Tsang Kan-Cheung
<i>Ip Man</i>	2008	<i>Ye Wen</i>	叶问	Wilson Yip Wai-Shun
<i>Ip Man 2</i>	2010	<i>Ye Wen 2</i>	叶问 2	Wilson Yip Wai-Shun
<i>Isabella</i>	2006	<i>Yi Sha Bei La</i>	伊莎贝拉	Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung
<i>Jade Goddess of Mercy</i>	2003	<i>Yu Guan Yin</i>	玉观音	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Jan Dara</i>	2001	<i>Wan Niang</i>	晚娘	Nonzee Nimibutr
<i>Ju Dou</i>	1990	<i>Ju Dou</i>	菊豆	Zhang Yimou
<i>Jurassic Park</i>	1993	<i>Zhu Luo Ji Gong Yuan</i>	侏罗纪公园	Steven Spielberg
<i>Kill Bill</i>	2003-2004	<i>Sha Si Bi Er</i>	杀死比尔	Quentin Tarantino
<i>King Kong</i>	2005	<i>Jin Gang</i>	金刚	Peter Jackson
<i>King of Beggars</i>	1992	<i>Su Qi Er</i>	苏乞儿	Gordon Chan Kar-Seung
<i>Koma</i>	2004	<i>Jiu Ming</i>	救命	Chi-Leung Law
<i>Kung Fu Hustle</i>	2004	<i>Gong Fu</i>	功夫	Stephen Chow
<i>Lan Yu</i>	2001	<i>Lan Yu</i>	蓝宇	Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang
<i>Legend of the Fist: the Return of Chen Zhen</i>	2010	<i>Jing Wu Feng Yun</i>	精武风云	Andrew Lau Wai-Keung
<i>Little Big Soldier</i>	2010	<i>Da Bing Xiao Jiang</i>	大兵小将	Sheng Ding
<i>Lola Rennt (Run Lora Run)</i>	1998	<i>Luo La Kuai Pao</i>	罗拉快跑	Tom Tykwer

<i>Look for a Star</i>	2009	<i>You Long Xi Feng</i>	游龙戏凤	Andrew Lau Wai-Keung
<i>Lost in Beijing</i>	2007	<i>Ping Guo</i>	苹果	Li Yu
<i>Love in a Puff</i>	2010	<i>Zhi Ming Yu Chun Jiao</i>	志明与春娇	Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung
<i>Lust, Caution</i>	2007	<i>Se Jie</i>	色戒	Ang Lee
<i>Men Behind the Sun</i>	1988	<i>Hei Tai Yang 731</i>	黑太阳 731	Mou Tun-fei
<i>Men Suddenly in Black</i>	2003	<i>Da Zhang Fu</i>	大丈夫	Edmond Pang Ho-Cheung
<i>Mission: Impossible</i>	1996	<i>Die ZhongDie</i>	碟中谍	Brian De Palma
<i>Moulin Rouge</i>	2001	<i>Hong Mo Fang</i>	红磨坊	Baz Luhrmann
<i>Mr Nice Guy</i>	1997	<i>Yi Ge Hao Ren</i>	一个好人	Sammo Hung Kam Po
<i>Mural</i>	2011	<i>Hua Bi</i>	画壁	Gordon Chan Kar-Seung
<i>My Dream Girl</i>	2003	<i>Pao Zhi Nv Peng You</i>	炮制女朋友	Raymond Wip Wai-Man
<i>My Fair Lady</i>	1964	<i>Yao Tiao Shu Nv</i>	窈窕淑女	George Cukor
<i>My Name is Fame</i>	2006	<i>Wo Yao Cheng Ming</i>	我要成名	Lawrence Ah Mon (a.k.a. Lawrence Lau Kwok Cheong)
<i>New Fist of Fury</i>	1976	<i>Xin Jing Wu Men</i>	新精武门	Lo Wei
<i>Night and Fog</i>	2009	<i>Tian Shui Wai De Ye Yu Wu</i>	天水围的夜与雾	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Once a Gangster</i>	2010	<i>Fei Sha Feng Zhong Zhuan</i>	飞砂风中转	Felix Chong Man-Keung
<i>Once Upon a Time in China</i>	1991-1997	<i>Huang Fei Hong Xi Lie</i>	黄飞鸿系列	Tsui Hark
<i>One Fine Spring Day</i>	2001	<i>Chun Shi</i>	春逝	Heo Jin-ho (produced by Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>One Nite in Mongkok</i>	2004	<i>Wang Jiao Hei Ye</i>	旺角黑夜	Derek Yee Tung-Shing
<i>One-Armed Swordsman</i>	1967	<i>Du Bi Dao,</i>	独臂刀	Chang Cheh
<i>Overheard</i>	2009	<i>Qie Ting Feng Yun</i>	窃听风云	Derek Yee Tung-Shing
<i>Painted Skin</i>	2008	<i>Hua Pi</i>	画皮	Gordon Chan Kar-Seung
<i>Painted Skin</i>	1965	<i>Hua Pi</i>	画皮	Pau Fong
<i>Painted Skin</i>	1993	<i>Hua Pi Zhi Ying Yang Fa Wang</i>	画皮之阴阳法王	King Hu
<i>Painted Skin II</i>	2012	<i>Hua Pi 2</i>	画皮 2	Wu Er-shan
<i>Perhaps Love</i>	2005	<i>Ru Guo Ai</i>	如果爱	Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>Poker King</i>	2009	<i>Pu Ke Wang</i>	扑克王	Chan Hing-Kai & Janet Chun
<i>Police Tactic Unit II: Comrades In Arms</i>	2009	<i>PTU II: Tong Pao</i>	PTU II: 同袍	Wing-cheong Law (produced by Johnnie To Kei-fung)
<i>Prince of Tears</i>	2009	<i>Lei Wang Zi</i>	泪王子	Yon Fan
<i>Prot ég é</i>	2007	<i>Men Tu</i>	门徒	Derek Yee Tung-Shing
<i>Purple Storm</i>	1999	<i>Zi Yu Feng Bao</i>	紫雨风暴	Teddy Chan Tak Sum
<i>Rain Dogs</i>	2006	<i>Tai Yang Yu</i>	太阳雨	Ho Yu-Hang
<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	1991	<i>Da Hong Deng Long Gao Gao Gua</i>	大红灯笼高高挂	Zhang Yimou
<i>Rebellion</i>	2009	<i>Tong Men</i>	同门	Herman Yau Lai-To

<i>Red Cliff</i>	2008	<i>Chi Bi</i>	赤壁	John Woo
<i>Red Rose, White Rose</i>	1994	<i>Hong Mei Gui, Bai Mei Gui</i>	红玫瑰白玫瑰	Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang
<i>Red Sorghum</i>	1987	<i>Hong Gao Liang</i>	红高粱	Zhang Yimou
<i>Reign Behind the Curtain</i>	1983	<i>Chui Lian Ting Zheng</i>	垂帘听政	Li Han Hsiang
<i>Reign of Assassins</i>	2010	<i>Jian Yu</i>	剑雨	Su Chao-pin
<i>Return of the One Armed Swordsman</i>	1969	<i>Du Bi Dao Wang</i>	独臂刀王	Chang Cheh
<i>Road Home</i>	1999	<i>Wo De Fu Qin Mu Qin</i>	我的父亲母亲	Zhang Yimou
<i>Roman Holidays</i>	1953	<i>Luo Ma Jia Ri</i>	罗马假日	William Wyler
<i>Rouge</i>	1987	<i>Yan Zhi Kou</i>	胭脂扣	Stanley Kwan Kam-Pang
<i>Running on Karma</i>	2003	<i>Da Zhi Lao</i> (Mainland title: <i>Da Kuai Tou You Zhi Hui</i>)	大只佬 (内地片名:大块头有大智慧)	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>Rush Hour 2</i>	2001	<i>Jian Feng Shi Ke II</i>	尖峰时刻 2	Brett Ratner
<i>Seven Swords</i>	2005	<i>Qi Jian</i>	七剑	Tsui Hark
<i>Shanghai 13</i>	1984	<i>Shanghai Tan Shi San Tai Bao</i>	上海滩十三太保	Chang Cheh
<i>Shaolin Soccer</i>	2001	<i>Shaolin Zu Qiu</i>	少林足球	Stephen Chow Sing-Chi
<i>Shinjuku Incident</i>	2009	<i>Xin Su Shi Jian</i>	新宿事件	Derek Yee Tung-Shing
<i>Sparrow</i>	2008	<i>Wen Que</i>	文雀	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>Summer Snow</i> (a.k.a. <i>Woman in Forties</i>)	1995	<i>Nv Ren Si Shi</i>	女人四十	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Suzhou River</i>	2000	<i>Su Zhou He</i>	苏州河	Lou Ye
<i>The Banquet</i>	2006	<i>Ye Yan</i>	夜宴	Feng Xiaogang
<i>The Blue Kite</i>	1993	<i>Lan Feng Zheng</i>	蓝风筝	Tian Zhaungzhuang
<i>The Departed</i>	2006	<i>Wu Jian Dao Feng Yun</i>	无间道风云	Martin Scorsese
<i>The Enigmatic Case</i>	1980	<i>Bi Shui Han Shan Duo Min Jin</i>	碧水寒山夺命金	Johnnie To Kei-fung
<i>The Eye</i>	2002	<i>Jian Gui</i>	见鬼	Oxide Pang Chun & Danny Pang
<i>The First 7th Night</i>	2009	<i>Tou Qi</i>	头七	Herman Yau Lai-To
<i>The Founding of a Republic</i>		<i>Jian Guo Da Ye</i>	建国大业	Sanping Han & Jianxin Huang
<i>The Ghost Story</i>	1979	<i>Gui Jiao Chun</i>	鬼叫春	Li Han Hsiang
<i>The Great Decisive Wars</i>	1991	<i>Da Jue Zhan</i>	大决战	Li Jun
<i>The Lion Roars</i>	2002	<i>He Dong Shi Hou</i>	河东狮吼	Joe Ma Wai-ho
<i>The Longest Nite</i>	1998	<i>An Hua</i>	暗花	Johnnie To Kei-fung & Wai Ka-Fai
<i>The Lord of the Rings Trilogy</i>	2001-2003	<i>Zhi Huan Wang Xi Lie</i>	指环王系列	Peter Jackson

<i>The Lost Bladesman</i>	2011	<i>Guan Yun Chang</i>	关云长	Alan Mak & Felix Chong
<i>The Lost World: Jurassic Park</i>	1997	<i>Zhu Luo Ji Gong Yuan: Shi Luo De Shi Jie</i>	侏罗纪公园: 失落的世界	Steven Spielberg
<i>The Lover Letter</i>	1999	<i>Qing Shu</i>	情书	Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>The Matrix</i>	1999	<i>Hei Ke Di Guo</i>	黑客帝国	Larry & Andy Wachowski
<i>The Missing Cinderella</i>	1959	<i>Jin Zhi Yu Ye</i>	金枝玉叶	Ng Wui
<i>The Myth</i>	2005	<i>Shen Hua</i>	神话	Stanley Tong Kwai Lai
<i>The New Legend Of Shaolin</i>	1994	<i>Hong Xi Guan Zhi Shao Lin Wu Zu a.k.a. Xin Shao Lin Wu Zu</i>	洪熙官之少林五祖, 或, 新少林五祖	Wong Jing & Corey Yuen
<i>The Opium War</i>	1997	<i>Ya Pain Zhan Zheng</i>	鸦片战争	Xie Jin
<i>The Postmodern Life of My Aunt</i>	2006	<i>Yi Ma de Hou Xian Dai Sheng Huo</i>	姨妈的后现代生活	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>The Promise</i>	2005	<i>Wu Ji</i>	无极	Chen Kaige
<i>The Shaolin Temple</i>	1982	<i>Shao Lin Si</i>	少林寺	Chang Hsin-yan
<i>The Stool Pigeon</i>	2010	<i>Xian Ren</i>	线人	Dante Lam Chiu-Yin
<i>The Storm Riders</i>	1998	<i>Feng Yun Xiong Ba Tian Xia</i>	风云雄霸天下	Andrew Lau Wai-keung
<i>The Texas Chain Saw Massacre</i>	1974	<i>De Zhou Dian Ju Shao Ren Kuang</i>	德州电锯杀人狂	Tobe Hooper
<i>The Touch</i>	2002	<i>Tian Mai</i>	天脉	Peter Pau Tak-Hei
<i>The Truth About Jane and Sam</i>	1999	<i>Zhen Xin Hua</i>	真心话	Derek Yee Tung-Sing
<i>The Untold Story (a.k.a. The Eight Immortal Restaurant: Human Meat Pies)</i>	1993	<i>Ba Xian Fan Dian Zhi Ren Rou Chao Shao Bao</i>	八仙饭店之人肉叉烧包	Herman Yau Lai-To
<i>The Warlords</i>	2007	<i>Tou Ming Zhuang</i>	投名状	Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>The Way We Are</i>	2008	<i>Tian Shui Wai De Ri Yu Ye</i>	天水围的日与夜	Ann Hui On-Wah
<i>Three</i>	2002	<i>San Geng</i>	三更	Peter Chan Ho-sun, Kim Jee-woon & Nonzee Nimibutr (produced by Peter Chan Ho-sun)
<i>Three Kingdoms: Resurrection of the Dragon</i>	2008	<i>San Guo Zhi Jian Long Xie Jia</i>	三国之见龙卸甲	Daniel Lee Yan-Kong
<i>Three... Extremes</i>	2004	<i>San Geng 2</i>	三更 2	Fruit Chan, Chan-wook Park & Takashi Miike (produced by Peter Chan Ho-sun)

<i>Three: Going Home</i>	2002	<i>Sna Jin Zhi Hui Jia</i>	三更之回家	Peter Chan Ho-sun
<i>To Live and Die in Mongkok</i>	2009	<i>Wang Jiao Jian Yu</i>	旺角监狱	Wong Jing
<i>Too Many Ways to Be Number One</i>	1997	<i>Yi Ge Zi Tou De Dan Sheng</i>	一个字头的诞生	Wai Ka-Fai
<i>Triads: The Inside Story</i>	1989	<i>Wo Zai Hei She Hui De Ri Zi</i>	我在黑社会的日子	Taylor Wong Tai-Loi
<i>Vengeance!</i>	1970	<i>Bao Chou</i>	报仇	Chang Cheh
<i>Victim</i>	1999	<i>Mu Lu Xiong Guang</i>	目露凶光	Ringo Lam Ling-Tung
<i>Who am I?</i>	1998	<i>Wo Shi Shui?</i>	我是谁?	Benny Chan Muk-Sing & Jackie Chan
<i>Wicked City</i>	1992	<i>Yao Shou Du Shi</i>	妖兽都市	Peter Mak (produced by Tsui Hark)
<i>Written By</i>	2009	<i>Zai Sheng Hao</i>	再生号	Wai Ka-Fai
<i>Young and Dangerous Series</i>	1996-2000	<i>Gu Huo Zai Xi Lie</i>	古惑仔系列	Andrew Lau Wai-keung

Appendix B

Publications during the Candidature:

HE, H. H.-J. (2009). Diaspora Films as Cultural Contact Zones: A Case Study on ‘The Home Song Stories’. *Global Media Journal - Australian Edition - Volume 3: 1* 2009.
http://www.commart.uws.edu.au/gmjau/v3_2009_1/3vi1_hillary_he_PG.html

HE, H. H.-J. (2010). Connected through Remakes: Intercultural Dialogue between Hollywood and Chinese Cinema. *Asian Cinema Journal, Spring-Summer Issue 21(1)*, 179-192.

HE, H. H.-J. (2011) “One Movie, Two Versions”: Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema in Mainland China. *Global Media Journal - Australian Edition - Volume 4:2* 2010
http://www.commart.uws.edu.au/gmjau/v4_2010_2/hilary_hongjin_RA.html

(An earlier version of this article was first published in 2010 in the Working Paper Series No.103, David C. Lam Institute for East-West Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University. <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~lewi/WPS/103%20He.pdf>)

HE, H. H.-J. (2012) “Chineseness-es” Outside Mainland China: Macao and Taiwan through Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* Volume 5, April 2012 (forthcoming)

HE, H. H.-J. (2012) *I Wish I Knew: Comprehending China’s Cultural Reform Through Shanghai Expo* in T. Winter (ed) *Shanghai Expo: An International Forum on the Future of Cities*. London and New York: Routledge (2012 forthcoming).