Transforming Martial Arts for Global Consumption: Narrative Strategies of *Crouching Tiger; Hidden Dragon*

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Introduction

The proliferation of Chinese martial arts cinema in the new millennium is marked by Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000). The Oscar-winner presents “a perfectly tailored, ‘unthreatening’ portrait of the Chinese” to global audiences and stands out as “the one martial arts film that legitimizes the genre as *bona fide* cinema in the mainstream market”[1], henceforth inspiring a new wave of Chinese-language martial arts epics like *Hero* (2002), *House of Flying Daggers* (2004), *The Promise* (2005), *Seven Swords* (2005), *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006), *The Warlords* (2007), *Detective Dee and the Mystery of the Phantom Flame* (2010) and *Dragon* (2011), etc. Compared with the conventional Hong Kong martial arts cinema, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* populates the canonically masculine genre with women warriors and features their uneasy individual pursuits in a refined Confucian society. Such reconfigurations transcend the previous
dismissal of the genre as lowbrow entertainment in the West, thus providing a transnational interstitial site for the Chinese cinema to reach global market.

The modern transformation of the martial arts genre in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* arouses multiple responses from differently positioned audiences, and controversies have not quite abated despite its colossal success in the global market. Stephen Teo frowns at the “asymmetric structure” of martial arts and romance in the narrative (2000); Matthew Levi detects a feminist fable under the disguise of martial arts spectacles (2001); Kenneth Chan examines the ideological implications of constructing an image of “China” for Western audiences (2004); L. S. Kim situates the film in the tradition of the woman warrior in martial arts cinema (2006); Huaiting Wu takes the film as an example of cultural hybridization (2007); whereas Kin-Yan Szeto sees the film as a recuperation of Hong Kong martial arts cinema in the global era (2011). These criticisms examine the film’s narrative pattern, aesthetic form and gender politics from perspectives of Western feminism, stereotypes, postcolonial self-Orientalization, as well as Ang Lee’s cross-cultural engagements with his Chinese homeland and American host-land. If Teo Larry’s questioning of whether *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is a “triumph of Chinese cosmopolitanism” or a “debasement to the traditional martial arts genre” proposes two binary axes to evaluate the film,[2] I try to arrive some understanding beyond such logic and take the film as a carefully-designed entertainment product for global consumption.

My central concern is: What makes *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* so accessible to worldwide audiences? What kind of strategies is utilized to upgrade the conventional martial arts cinema? Are they effective? In what ways? In contrast to the presentation of tough masculinity in Hong Kong martial arts cinema, women warriors’ struggle between individual yearnings and familial obligations constitutes an integral part of the martial arts narrative in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Throughout the narrative, the subtle description of emotional interactions intermingle with the balletic combat sequences set in a mythical China, and the film is aptly promoted as “a mix of Jane Austen lovemaking with Bruce Lee butt-kicking” or “a kung fu *Titanic*” for global film markets in which Hollywood is a dominant force.[3] The following is to explore narrative strategies of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* within the context of adapting the conventional martial arts genre for contemporary cosmopolitan audiences.
I. Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema: Genre, Gender and Transnational Reception

Hong Kong martial arts cinema has been a hot academic interest for more than 30 years. Scholars like Verina Glaessner, Stuart Kaminsky, Bey Logan, Stephen Teo, Tzu-Yun Lai and John Hamm have written about the origin of swordsman stories in relation to Chinese folklore and Beijing Opera, the beginning of “swordplay” movies in Shanghai in the 1920s, and the rise of martial arts genre to prominence in Hong Kong cinema since the 1960s. In hundreds of martial arts films produced by the Shaw Brothers Studio, the recurrent tale of the swordsman’s commitment to justice in a marginalized Jianghu underworld satisfies the overseas Chinese communities’ dream of physical empowerment and quasi-nationalist fantasies.[4]

For instance, the commercial hit The Chinese Connection (1972, aka. Fist of Fury) tells a familiar martial arts story of how Bruce Lee seeks revenge for his kung fu master by defeating a roomful of Japanese samurais in a semi-colonial Shanghai in 1908.[5] Lee’s indignant declaration “We are not the sick people of Asia” after smashing a humiliating signboard sent by the Japanese villains, as well as the final freeze frame encapsulating Lee’s prowess in a flying kick, interweaves the individual mission of vengeance with the defense of national dignity in response to China’s humiliation in modern history.[6] The iconic image of the masculine hero, along with themes of revenge and fighting between good and evil, spectacles of physical training, stunning choreography, stock characters and period costume, establishes a set of generic features for the martial arts cinema. Generally regarded as a male-star-driven genre, Hong Kong martial arts cinema captures generations of Chinese audiences by constructing the chivalrous swordsman as an exponent of Confucian ethics, seeking justice and maintaining traditional values in a spirit of noble sacrifice.

The gender politics of Hong Kong martial arts cinema, nevertheless, does not exclude the woman warrior from dominating the narrative. Long before the appearance of strong action woman on Hollywood screens, Hong Kong cinema features “an extraordinary number of women warriors […] doing battle with the menfolk on an equal footing”.[7] The Shaw Brothers Studio nurtures a rich assembly of female stars like Cheng Pei-pei, Connie Chan Po-chu, Sibelle Hu, Hui Ying Hung and Michelle Yeoh whose heroic feats on screen mesmerize audiences. The “rich, if hitherto repressed” woman warrior tradition in martial arts cinema, ranging from the classic Come Drink with Me (1966) and The Golden Swallow (1968) to the
modern-day Yes, Madam (1985) and The Heroic Trio (1993), adds an extra layer of visual exotica to the predominantly masculine genre. More importantly, the woman warrior is constructed as reverent about Confucian conventions, since she often utilizes her martial arts skills to protect chastity or to shelter a community from external threat “due to either the absence or enfeebled condition of a male heir in the family”[9]. In King Hu’s masterpiece A Touch of Zen (1969) which wins international recognition at Cannes, the swordswoman’s motivation to confront male villains in the Jianghu underworld and official persecution is to seek revenge for her father. As the woman warrior is pushed temporarily onto stage to assume the role of the avenger or the guardian, her possession of “male” prowess and subversive potential to disrupt the Confucian patriarchal ethics is contained by the narrative emphasis on her commitment to filial piety or noble patriotism. More often than not, the woman warrior is constructed as an asexual being dedicated to heroism. To further reconcile the woman warrior’s gender “transgression”, the film often removes her from the public sphere by describing her withdrawal to reclusion or return to the patriarchal family towards the ending. The careful maneuvering of the gender issue in Hong Kong martial arts cinema restores the woman warrior to the “feminine” space of domesticity and denies a Western feminist reading of the narrative.

The reception of the martial arts genre in the West has undergone a significant shift in the past decades. Although Bruce Lee boosts the kung fu craze in the U.S., Hong Kong martial arts films of excessive violence are initially taken as a campy “chop-socky” for non-mainstream consumption. Traditionally associated as low-budget B-movies targeted at Chinatown theatres and cult video stores, the martial arts films gradually spill into Hollywood mainstream productions in the 1990s, testifying to Huysen’s argument that postmodern mass culture features a reevaluation of formerly devalued forms and genres of cultural expression.[10] In a surge of commercial hits like Tomorrow Never Dies (1997), The Matrix (1998), Rush Hour series (1998, 2001, 2007) and Charlie’s Angels (2000, 2003), stylishly choreographed martial arts sequences merge with American discourses of multiculturalism and women’s empowerment in accordance to the changing political, cultural and economic contexts. The shift of the martial arts genre towards the mainstream is best exemplified by Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, an international co-production of multicultural cast and crew. The elaborate cinematography of women warriors’ graceful combat set in ancient China bestows
the film with poetic flourishes of a Chinese watercolor painting, thus breaking the habitual association of martial arts cinema with B-movie action flicks of voluminous bloodshed and cheesy special effects. Despite some Asian audiences’ reservations about its daring re-writing of the martial arts genre, the film receives warm embrace in the West and invites multiple readings as an exotic love story, a feminist tale, a sword-fighting thriller, as well as an art-house film. Considering Ang Lee’s reputation as a renowned crossover director producing quality films for middle-brow audiences, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon engages the politics of genre, aesthetics, gender and ethnicity across American and Chinese frameworks to upgrade the martial arts genre for global consumption.

II. Narrative Strategies of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

The convergence of Hollywood aesthetics and Hong Kong martial arts conventions in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon demonstrates a fluid generic mixture. Since Ang Lee is applauded as a “cultural chameleon” claiming allegiance to both Chinese and American cinematic conventions, the narrative of martial arts romance incorporates a variety of Hollywood genres and motifs to appeal to Western audiences. In a flashback sequence set in the desert, a crane shot of a queue of caravans moving across the hostile territory cuts to a low-angle shot of an exotic gang of bandits on horseback, accompanied by an ominous pluck at the string in the soundtrack. The cinematic treatment of the ambush—the camera movement, the music score and the rugged setting—bears a striking resemblance to John Ford’s construction of Indian raid in classic westerns. Such visual reference to Hollywood westerns is interwoven with thematic and narrative references to western melodrama. Ang Lee interprets the martial arts epic in terms of family dramas: “[F]amily dramas and Sense and Sensibility are all about conflict, about family obligations versus free will... (the martial arts form) externalizes the elements of restraint and exhilaration”, and he admits employing “Freudian or Western techniques” to probe the “prohibited feelings” in a feudalistic martial arts world. The film uses its first 15 minutes to establish the diegetic world of Confucian China and introduces the characters’ emotional restraints, and the canonical martial arts theme of revenge is somewhat diluted by the storyline of woman’s pursuit of individuality. If the depiction of the young woman warrior Jen’s bold sexual transgression in the Wild West subverts ethical boundaries of the martial arts genre, the veteran swordswoman Shu-lien’s sisterly advice as “be true to yourself” to Jen
echoes to the motif of female bonding in contemporary Hollywood movies. The film’s ending shot of a defiant Jen flying off a mountain cliff is reminiscent of the final freeze frame of the heroines’ death defying drive off the cliff in the feminist classic *Thelma and Louise* (1991). On the other hand, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* pays homage to Hong Kong martial arts cinema, as Ang Lee takes the film as the fulfillment of his “childhood fantasies” for martial arts films. Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon features the sub-theme of Zen metaphysics and re-invents classic choreographed tableaus of combat in a bamboo grove and a teahouse in King Hu’s *A Touch of Zen* (1969). The canonical martial arts theme of revenge is reiterated with a stock repertoire of characters in the Jianghu underworld. The martial arts tradition is further reinforced by casting veteran action stars like Cheng Pei-pei and Michelle Yeoh in the lead roles. Released during Hollywood’s drift towards martial arts aesthetics, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon bespeaks a flexible entertainment product in the transnational context of cultural exchange.

The slippery ideological stance about gender in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon re-writes the stereotypical association of martial arts genre with masculine violence and brings the film to wider audiences. The film treats the female trio of Jen, Shu-lien and Jade Fox as its narrative focus and features their dynamic relationship of dependence, romance and confrontation with the swords-master Li Mubai. Leading a double life as a delicate aristocratic lady in the day and black-clad swordswoman at night, Jen’s adventurous transgression into the Jianghu underworld constitutes the primary driving force of the narrative. Different from those women warriors bolstered by the “proper” motivation of filial piety or patriotism in Hong Kong martial arts cinema, Jen is a more sophisticated character torn by the yearning for freedom and the call of filial duty to accept a political marriage in exchange for her father’s promotion. Jen’s vacillation between individual pursuit and familial obligations is demonstrated by her stealing, returning and re-stealing of a legendary sword that originally belongs to Li Mubai, yet when she runs away from the wedding and plunges into the assumed freedom of the Jianghu underworld, the wandering woman warrior encounters multiple frustrations since the Jianghu underworld is under the grip of a different, but equally repressive ideology written by men at large. With little understanding of the martial arts ethics, Jen repeatedly turns down Li Mubai’s generous offer of supervision. Impatient with his intonation of Taoist philosophy and calling his martial arts school a “whorehouse”, Jen refuses to kneel down to acknowledge Li as the master. The
sequence is particularly interesting in that it parodies the strict master-disciple hierarchy and gender relationship in the martial arts world. The description of Jen’s impetuous defiance against the reigning patriarchy, as well as her self-centered obstinacy and self-conscious remorse, endears the woman warrior to audiences as she acts “like a contemporary American teenage girl”[15]. Such sympathetic treatment of women is further exemplified by the back-story of Jade Fox’s sexual exploitation by Li Mubai’s master. Due to the rigid gender regulation of Wudang School, Jade fox fails to trade her sexuality for martial arts skills and steals the secret manual after killing the master. With no “proper” guidance and regardless of ethical codes, Jade Fox turns out to be an embittered social outcast and the arch rival of Li Mubai. The canonical theme of fighting between good and evil is somehow obscured since Jade Fox is partly molded by the strict patriarchal world, and the honor is not granted to the vengeful swords-master but consistently delayed. The casting of the veteran star Cheng-Pei, who often played righteous female avengers in classic Hong Kong martial arts cinema, in the villainous role of Jade Fox, is rich in inter-textual references and connotes a mild surge of indignation over women’s exploitation in patrilineal society.[16] The proto-feminist touch functions to update the conventional masculine martial arts genre and renders the film accessible to both male and female audiences.

*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* further softens the aggressive stance of classic Hong Kong martial arts cinema by downplaying the swordsman’s tough masculinity. The legendary swords-master Li Mubai hardly qualifies as the typical hero of the martial arts world, since he surrenders his sword to the royal prince to retire from the *Jianghu* underworld at the beginning of the film. Marked by a tone of weary detachment and quiet resignation, Li is caught in a dilemma of whether to retreat into seclusion to perfect his martial arts techniques or to renounce professional pursuit to confess his long-repressed love for Shu-lien. The subtle description of Li’s emotional life “humanizes” the swordsman’s tough-guy image and signifies a determined departure from the loner hero of martial arts tradition. The narrative neutralizes Li’s masculine authority by featuring his reluctant involvements in the *Jianghu* underworld and his thwarted efforts to assert patriarchal supervision over the disobedient Jen. In the teahouse action sequence, the cross-dressing Jen single-handedly defeats a roomful of pompous swordsmen who are equipped with heavyweight weapons, later when the indignant swordsmen gather to complain about the ruthless young “man”, the camera pans around slowly and captures their
bruised faces, bandaged arms and broken legs, as well as their dumbfounded expressions upon learning Jen’s real identity as a married aristocratic woman. The episode pokes fun at the stock characters of martial arts cinema, parodying the genre slightly with a cinematic in-joke about masculine stereotypes. By incorporating humor and shifting the focus away from masculine heroism, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* evokes audiences’ sympathetic engagement with the woman warrior’s quest for freedom.

The underlying sympathy towards the woman warrior nonetheless intertwines with a note of defensive justification for the Confucian patriarchy in the cinematic narrative. Li Mu Bai is constructed as a symbol of benevolent patriarchal power approved by the royal prince and revered by the *Jianghu* underworld. The swords-master shows kindness to the conflicted Jen as he forgives her challenges, shelters her from troubles and even makes an exception to recruit her as his disciple. Li feels obliged to redeem the young warrior from the poisonous influence of Jade Fox and lead her back to the “proper” martial arts way, though such kindness is not appreciated by Jen. Indeed, Jen’s pursuit of individuality beyond the confines of family, romance, friendship and ethical codes of the *Jianghu* underworld, as well as her rebellion against all forms of patriarchal dominance from the arranged marriage to the master-disciple hierarchy, bespeaks a radical quest for freedom ahead of her time, testifying to the feudal misogynist fear of uncontrollable female ambition. The character of Jen is therefore constructed as a site of intervention in the hegemonic binary split between public and private, male and female role of the martial arts genre. On the other hand, Jen’s disruption of the gender norms is contained when the film makes a repentant Jen kneel down at Li’s death. The swords-master’s noble sacrifice to save Jen eventually tames the rebellious young woman, and Jen submits to the patriarchal hegemony and moral authority which Li stands for. The plot arrangement, to American film critic Pham, is “the moment of feminism’s failure”, yet it serves to restore the patriarchal authority in accordance with martial arts convention and soothes those audiences who are more familiar with and nostalgic about the genre.[17] The ambivalent attitude in criticizing Chinese patriarchal hegemony and mythologizing a benign Confucian tradition in the film re-invents the martial arts genre with a different set of gendered encoding. Multiplicitous interpretations of gender politics in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* enable the film to cross the generic and cultural boundaries to reach wider audiences,
especially in consideration of the popular trend of women’s empowerment and individual quest in American cinema since the 1990s.

To globalize the martial arts genre, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* adapts to the multicultural discourse of Chinese ethnicity by foregrounding Oriental exotica. The martial arts epic is released as an art-house film following the conventional ethnic trajectory of Chinese language films in the West.\(^{[18]}\) As Ang Lee is noted for his subtle handling of Chinese immigrant life and Hollywood projects of different genres, the film caters to Western audiences’ Orientalist fantasies with the creation of Eastern tranquility and peculiar customs in the *mise-en-scène*. The film re-works on “those old-fashioned Hollywood romantic epics” like *The King and I* (1956) and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) to create an imaginary China of mystery and wisdom.\(^{[19]}\)

In several occasions throughout the narrative, Li Mubai talks about aspirations to follow the Taoist way and intonates mysterious dictums of Zen-like philosophy, a tradition that is traceable to Bruce Lee who often uses martial arts skills and Eastern philosophy to right wrongs. The film also inserts a 20-minute-long sequence of romance and probes into the realm of woman’s sexuality that is seldom touched in conventional martial arts cinema. Occupying almost 1/6 of the total running time, the section describes how Jen chases after the bandit Lo in the desert, shooting arrows and piercing lances from horseback. The non-stop horse galloping then turns into a wild romance, and the camera captures the young couple’s passionate love-making against magnificent backdrops of scorched terrain, expanse of prairie and snow-covered mountains. The sumptuous presentation of Oriental sensuality and the panoramic sweeps of exotic landscapes, reminiscent of the calculated display of banquet customs and oriental food in Ang Lee’s previous art-movie hits *Pushing Hands* (1991), *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) and *Eat Drink Man Woman* (1994), launches the film from the perspective of ethnic minority and caters to Western audiences’ collective memory of the exotic Orient. The visual exotica of romance, in the mean time, turns outs a hindrance to the conventional martial arts agenda of the free-wandering warrior. The film then makes Jen detach herself from romantic involvement, reject her secret bandit-lover and plunge into the *Jianghu* underworld. The plot twist occurs again at the ending when Jen jumps off the cliff after a brief of re-union with Lo. Unable to carve out a space for autonomy in the *Jianghu* underworld as well as society, Jen flies off the cliff, soaring defiantly and eternally into the mist. The final shot arouses multiple interpretations, and opinions diverge from seeing it as the “magical convergence of ‘China’ and ‘the West’ and
Chinese folk legend and global pop-feminism[^20] to reading it as a sudden twist towards “the mysterious atmosphere of Zen metaphysics”[^21]. Such fluid perceptions from different cultural discourses make *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* available to wider audiences.

**Conclusion**

In the contemporary age of globalization, cinema participates in the global circuit of capital flow, talent and culture and helps blur the national, ethnic and generic boundaries. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is emblematic of such a hybrid cultural product in terms of its material production and narrative aesthetics, transcending the East-West dichotomy or high-low genre divisions. The fluid blending of genres, the ambivalent gender politics and the adaptation for multicultural discourse constitute a set of effective strategies to transform the overworked martial arts genre for global consumption. The simultaneously “local” and “global” nature of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* illuminates what Aihwa Ong has called “the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space” that characterizes contemporary era.[^22] The assimilation of Hollywood conventions into the martial arts tale in the film targets the split of public/private spheres in the martial arts genre and strategizes the cultural/sociopolitical awareness of emotional suppression as the site of challenge and innovation. Instead of corrupting the classic genre, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* rejuvenates the martial arts cinema with playful re-configurations and multiple generic associations, inspiring such innovative projects like Peter Chan’s thriller *Dragon* (2011) which peels away the layers of mystery of martial arts with abundant computer-generated charts of human anatomy explaining how and why a single blow to a pressure point can kill a man.

**Notes:**

[1] Kwai-Cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/Off: The Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong* (Urbana, Hong Kong: University of Illinois Press, 2005) 187; Derek Elley, “Asia to ‘Tiger’: Kung-fuoeey”, *Variety* 38.11 (2001) 5-11; Mark Adams, “Film: Really Love your Tiger Feat; Director’s Cut: Ang Lee on What Inspired Him to Make a Chinese Language Martial Arts Film”, *The Mirror* 5 January 2001.

[2] Larry Teo, “A Triumphant Roar for Taiwan Filmmaker Lee”, *The Straits Times* (Singapore) 26 January 2001.

[3] Charles Pappas, “Improbable Eastern Hit Proves It Can Fly in U.S.”, *Advertising Age* 26 March 2001.
[4] Verina Glaessner, *Kung Fu: Cinema of Vengeance* (London: Lorimer; New York: Bounty Books, 1974); Thomas R. Atkins, ed., *Graphic Violence on the Screen* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976); Bey Logan, *Hong Kong Action Cinema* (Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1995); Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: BFI Publishing, 1997); Tzu-Yun Lai, "Translating Chinese Martial Arts Fiction, with Reference to the Novels of Jin Yong", Diss. (Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 1998); John Hamm, *Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

[5] Stephen Teo argues that martial arts movies are divided into two categories: the sword-fighting films and the *kung fu* (fist-fighting) films. The former often feature heroes using swords and imaginary weapons in a fantastic pre-modern China, whereas the latter emphasize the body and training to defeat the evil in a realistic society, as in the films of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan. In this paper they are generally categorized as martial arts movies. Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema* (1997) 98.

[6] It is no surprise that in Bruce Lee’s international hit *Enter the Dragon* (1973), Warner Brothers Studio tones down the nationalist associations by casting Lee as an agent of the British government.

[7] Bey Logan, *Hong Kong Action Cinema* (1995) 153.

[8] Zhen Zhang, "Bodies in the Air: The Magic of Science and the Fate of the Early ‘Martial Arts’ Film in China", *Postscript* 20. 2 & 3 (Winter/Spring & Summer 2001) 43-60; Weihong Bao, “From Pearl White to the White Rose Woo: Tracing the Vernacular Body of Nuxia in Chinese Silent Cinema, 1927-1931", *Camera Obscura* 60, 20. 3 (Fall 2005) 193-230.

[9] Zhen Zhang, *Postscript* 20. 2 & 3 (Winter/Spring & Summer 2001) 53.

[10] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide* (Indiana University Press, 1986) 59.

[11] Some sources believe the low film attendance in China is because of VCD piracy and the government’s three-month hold-up during the vital first three summer months of the film’s release. Stephen Teo, “Love and Swords: the Dialectics of Martial Arts Romance”, *Sense of Cinema* (Dec. 2000) http://www.senseofcinema.com/contents/00/11/crouching.html, retrieved on 20-06-2013; Felicia Chan, “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Cultural Migrancy and Translatability”, *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed., Chris Berry (London: BFI Publishing, 2003) 56-64; Kenneth Chan, “The Global Return of the Wuxiapian (Chinese Sword-fighting Movie): Ang Lee’s Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”, *Cinema Journal* 43.4 (Summer 2004) 3-18; L. S. Kim, “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon Making Women Warriors—A Transnational Reading of Asian Female Action Heroes”, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* 48, Spring 2006.

[12] In response to some Chinese accusations of the film being “too Hollywood”, Lee explains, “[T]hat was the only way to make this movie. Hollywood financed it, Hollywood was responsible for the esthetics. I use a lot of language that’s not spoken in the Ching dynasty. Is that good or bad? Is it Westernization or is it modernization?" Nisid Hajari, “Erasing the Boundaries”, *Newsweek*, special edition, “Issue Asia” (July-September 2001) 79; Ang Lee & James Schamus, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: A Portrait of the Ang Lee Film* (New York: New Market Press, 2000) 40; 83; 116.

[13] Scarlet Cheng, “Ready to Pounce”, *Far Eastern Economic Review* (6 July 2000): 27.

[14] As Kenneth Chan notices, whether one attributes this choice to the source material for the screenplay (Wang Du Lu’s novel) or to Chow Yun-Fat’s lack of martial arts experience, Lee
decided to shift the action sequences away from Chow Yun-Fat's character. However, one can still credit Lee and James Schamus for wanting to pursue a project that deviated in its gender conventions from the genre. Kenneth Chan, *Cinema Journal* 43.4 (Summer 2004): 3-18; “Ang Lee and James Schamus”, *The Guardian/NFT Interview*, 7 November 2001, http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2000/nov/07/3.

[15] Kwai-Cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/Off* (Urbana; Hong Kong: University of Illinois Press, 2005) 187.

[16] Talking about the significance of the casting, Lee says, “[W]hen I was a child, Cheng Pei-pei was our Michelle Yeoh—at the top of her game in every way, physically powerful, earning amazing money. But she retired at the age of 23, at her peak, for a guy who later dumped her and took her kids—the way Jade Fox feels like she was used and betrayed by Mu Bai’s master.” Gemma Files, “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”, http://www.eye.net/eyeissue/issue_12.07.00/film/tiger.html> Retrieved on 25-06-2013.

[17] Minh-Ha Pham, “The Asian Invasion (of Multiculturalism) in Hollywood”, *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 32.3 (Fall 2004) 121-132.

[18] Andrew Pulver, “Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright”, *The Guardian Manchester* (3 November 2000) 6.

[19] Kin-Yan Szeto, *The Martial Arts Cinema of the Chinese Diaspora: Ang Lee, John Woo, and Jackie Chan in Hollywood* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2011) 53.

[20] Fran Martin, “The China Simulacrum: Genre, Feminism, and Pan-Chinese Cultural Politics in Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”, in Chris Berry, Fei Lu, eds., *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005) 159.

[21] Kwai-Cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/Off* (Urbana; Hong Kong: University of Illinois Press, 2005) 187.

[22] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999) 4.

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