UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Film Studies

Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Response of Filmmakers Following the Political Handover from Britain to the People's Republic of China

by

Sherry Xiaorui Xu

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ABSTRACT

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HONG KONG CINEMA SINCE 1997: THE RESPONSE OF FILMMAKERS FOLLOWING THE POLITICAL HANDOVER FROM BRITAIN TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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This thesis was instigated through a consideration of the views held by many film scholars who predicted that the political handover that took place on the July 1 1997, whereby Hong Kong was returned to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from British colonial rule, would result in the "end" of Hong Kong cinema. From that day onwards, Hong Kong cinema would no longer enjoy its previously unfettered and uninhibited revolutionary creativity and the Hong Kong film industry could thereby be perceived as being "in crisis".

In considering whether these predictions have actually come to pass, this thesis sets out to focus on exploring representative Hong Kong filmmakers' activities and performances following Hong Kong becoming a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 1997 onwards. The exploration of the chosen filmmakers' activities and performances includes examining the filmmaking practices that they have embraced and analysing the exhibition and distribution patterns adopted by the films that they have produced. The intention is to examine to what extent the political transition has shaped these filmmakers' filmmaking practices and to observe the characteristics exhibited by the distribution and exhibition aspects of the films since the handover in order to specify any connection they may have with the momentous political handover. This thesis intends to show how Hong Kong cinema has responded to the challenges of an age of transition and globalisation through in-depth analyses of the activities of these key industry personnel that

have elevated Hong Kong cinema's position of regional and global popularity, and the commercially and critically significant films that they have made, covering the wider spectrum of genre, including those of action, comedy, realistic, horror and romantic drama. It is the aim of this thesis to present a new perspective that contributes to the study of post-colonial Hong Kong cinema.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, …….,

declare that the thesis entitled

……..……

……

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and that I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission;

Signed: ……..

Date:…….

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I am also indebted to the Hong Kong Film Archive and Hong Kong Film Service Office for kindly providing access to resources that I needed for my research.

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father who spoils me with all his love and influences me with his respectable morality.

Film titles, names of individual personnel and abbreviations used

Film titles

Hong Kong films and Chinese films (including films that were made in Mainland China and Taiwan) that are mentioned and closely examined in this thesis are all written using only their English titles. These films' proper Chinese titles are listed in English alphabetical order in the Glossary section of the thesis.

Names of individual personnel

Chinese filmmakers, directors, actors and related personnel who are discussed in this thesis will be denoted by their English names alongside their Chinese names, either in Cantonese or pinyin or in Wade – Giles System depending on whether they are from Mainland China (pinyin), Hong Kong (Cantonese) or Taiwan (Wade – Giles System), for example Peter Chan Ho-sun (from Hong Kong), Vicky Zhao Wei (from Mainland China), or Edward Yang (Wade – Giles System); for those who do not have English names, their names will be written in Cantonese or pinyin or Wade – Giles System depending on which region they are from, for example Wong Kar-wai (from Hong Kong), Zhang Yimou (from Mainland China), or Chang Chen (from Taiwan). Their proper Chinese names will be listed in simplified Chinese in the Glossary section.

Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations that are used in this thesis. They are all written out in full on their first appearances.

CEPA - Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement

CGI - Computer Generated Imagery

DVD - Digital Video Disk

FDF - Film Development Fund

FILMART - Hong Kong International Film and TV Market

GH - Golden Harvest

HAF - Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum

HKTDC - Hong Kong Trade Development Council

HKFDC - Hong Kong Film Development Council

HKSAR - Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

FSO - Film Services Office

PIFF - Pusan International Film Festival

PPP - Pusan Promotion Plan

PRC - People's Republic of China

SAR - Special Administrative Region

SARFT - State Administration of Radio, Film and Television

SARS - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndromes

VCD - Video Compact Disc

WTO - World Trade Organisation

Introduction

> On July 1, 1997, rule over the former British colony of Hong Kong was assumed by the government of mainland China, and film fanatics around the world suffered a collective anxiety attack. On that day a rigid and censorious regime became overseer of the planet's most uninhibited and anarchic film center, birthplace of *The Killer*, *The Bride with White Hair*, *Savior of the Soul*, *Dr. Lamb*, and other pop classics, and there was not a thing the distressed cinephile could do to stop it.… [T]here remained a strong sense that the free-spirited creative revolution that had begun a dozen or eighteen years before… had come to an end. The artistic community was already disrupted and dispersed, many stars, directors, and key personnel had gone to more salubrious locales, and even the most optimistic of those who stayed behind believed things could never be exactly the same. Film fans waited and wondered: was the future of Hong Kong cinema to be one of peasant tragedies and moral lessons, Beijing-approved art-house still lifes [*sic*]?[1]

Several years ago I first encountered these stark comments written by American author Lee Server in his 1999 study *Asian Pop Cinema: Bombay to Tokyo*. In his book, Server expressed deep concerns about the future of "uninhibited" and "free-spirited" creations that had dominated the productions of Hong Kong cinema for many years, in the wake of the political handover of Hong Kong from "Capitalist" to "Communist" rule on July 1st, 1997. Server paints a picture of "chaos", where filmmakers and the industry's key personnel abscond elsewhere, while those who elect to remain in Hong Kong await with trepidation some kind of "modification" of the industry. Throughout, a strong sense of anxiety and uncertainty is implied.

On first reading, Server's observations stirred in me many contrasting reactions. For one thing Server did not acknowledge one of the main political pre-requisites of the handover, namely the Chinese Mainland government's pledge to Hong Kong of a policy of 'one country, two systems', a policy designed to allow Hong Kong to be 'governed

by the Hong Kong people with a high degree of autonomy'[2] such as to 'maintain the characteristics of a free port and its status as a centre of international trade, finance and shipping'[3]. Some subsequent developments have borne out Server's anxieties, as in the case of the third installment of the box office hit *Infernal Affairs* trilogy (dir. Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, 2002, 2003) which was forced to change its storyline in order to 'please mainland authorities'[4] resulting in an assimilation of the 'Hong Kong formula to PRC requirements'[5]. Nevertheless, even in this particular case, the marketing campaign was aimed 'at external marketing over internal quality'[6], and the box office revenues both in Mainland China and Hong Kong proved the marketing strategy to be a huge success[7]as the film far exceeded its producers' expectations.

Another response to Server's apocalyptic scenario, and indeed that of others, is to note their failure to acknowledge that the Hong Kong film industry had been experiencing a severe decline for some time prior to the handover. For instance, the receipts from theatre attendances in Hong Kong had dropped from HK$66 million in 1988 to HK$44 million in 1993 and still further to a mere HK$28 million by 1995 (see Appendix: Table 2). At the same time, the number of annual feature production releases in Hong Kong had decreased from 215 in 1992 to only 84 in 1997. This figure subsequently increased to 133 by 2000, suggesting something of a post-handover resurgence (see Appendix: Chart 2).

Server's comments imply that political change produces social and economic instability, which directly or indirectly influences the development of Hong Kong cinema. Hence the question arises to what extent has the development of Hong Kong cinema truly been influenced by the handover. In examining the current critical scholarly thinking on Hong Kong cinema, it is evident that some of it focuses on the discussion of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema in the context of debating the cinema's cultural and political identity,[8] some of it concentrates on redefining the cinematic representation reflected

by post-1997 Hong Kong films,[9] whilst others tend to explore the development of the Hong Kong film industry as a component part of the emerging East Asian film industries that have steadily been achieving a high level of global popularity.[10] However, comparatively little scholarly work has focused on exploring in detail the impact of the political transition, and the characteristics currently exhibited by Hong Kong cinema as a result of that transition.

Research Aims and Scope

Given the aforementioned narratives exemplified by the quote from Server, the objective of my thesis is to disentangle facts from myths by investigating to what extent the development of Hong Kong cinema has been influenced by the political transition as Hong Kong completed its first decade of life as a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China and enters the second decade since the transition. In order to achieve such objective, I chose to focus on tracing the filmmaking trajectories of some of the prominent figures in the development of Hong Kong cinema such as Stephen Chow Sing Chi, Wong Kar-wai, and Fruit Chan to reflect on any changes occurring in their filmmaking practices that bear the imprint of the political handover. I shall also visit the films that not only acquired an industrial significance but also a critical merit, which were produced by these prominent figures. The intention of such an approach is to examine the distribution and exhibition patterns that these films adopted in order to conclude whether they embodied any strategies in response to the political transition. Given the accelerated increase in global trade and the new regard that East Asian cinema has achieved in the realms of world cinema, the approaches of my thesis will position these factors into the discourses in order to shed a new light on Hong Kong cinema's role in a regional, transnational and global context. In my pursuit of this task, I will not cover in any great depth Hong Kong's post-colonial identity and the intertexts embodied in the filmic image manifesting itself in post-1997 Hong Kong films, since these issues have already been extensively discussed by other scholars.[11] At the same

time, I realise that any approach of the filmmaking aspects necessarily cannot avoid discussing themes, contents and styles of films, as these form the very essence of the production strategies of filmmaking, and also to a certain extent best exemplify what impact the handover, and other possible key factors, have had on the filmmakers.

In discussing contemporary media industries, it is important to acknowledge the emergence of new distribution platforms in the 21st century, which encompass theatrical exhibition, and dissemination via television, DVD and BluRay, and more recently internet downloads and mobile phone technology. As scholar Michael Curtin has noted, contemporary media industries have become increasingly interconnected.[12] This can be witnessed through instances where 'feature films can drive TV syndication deals, providing core programming for video and cable services, [and for instance] attract Internet traffic to a Web portal'[13]. These developments have spawned new angles for the study of film industries and consequently they deserve special attention. However, my main focus in this thesis will be to assess the chosen films from the point of view of their theatrical distribution systems, while at the same time addressing issues such as VCD/DVD distribution and film festival circulation.

Studies of Pre-1997 Hong Kong Cinema

Amongst the wealth of current critical scholarship on Hong Kong cinema, Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*[14] and Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover's *City On Fire: Hong Kong Cinema*[15] are among the first major book-length critical studies that attempt to observe and understand Hong Kong cinema. Teo's book offers a historical perspective in its study of Hong Kong cinema, whilst Stokes and Hoover's book draws chiefly upon a political and economic approach to an investigation of Hong Kong cinema, which they proclaim as a 'crisis cinema'[16]. This claim echoes Teo's consideration of postmodernism, which he sees as commencing in

the mid-1980s.

Teo's book -consists of four parts, chronologically covering the period from the inception of Hong Kong cinema to, as he describes it, the 'end'[17]. As in the quote from Server referred to in the beginning of this chapter, the notion of an "end" conveys a sense of fear of an unknown future when Hong Kong returns to China and an anxiety of feeling akin to 'an era coming to a close'[18]. This uncertainty is perceived by Teo to be contributing to the phenomenon of postmodernism present in the films.[19] The postmodern phenomenon suggested by Teo reflects a range of "doppelganger" dimensions that are strangely contradictory: for instance, one dimension reveals Hong Kongers' escaping the identity emanating from their ancestral Chinese heritage; and yet another dimension implies the Hong Kongers' strong sense of belonging to their Chinese roots.[20] The works of filmmakers like Hark Tsui and Stephen Chow are examined from the aspects of their films' narrative and generic conventions to demonstrate their contradictory postmodernity: on the one hand filmmakers adopt new wave aesthetic styles, while on the other hand these styles are couched within a framework that is both nostalgic and parodying conventional formulae.[21] Similarly, whilst many films reveal a sense of 1997 anxiety, they also express a stronger sense of 'coming to terms'[22] with Mainland China through an emphasis of the Hong Kongers' own identity that is distinct from other Chinese; films portray how modernised Hong Kongers manage to embrace and integrate with their more "laid back", "premodern" Mainlander counterparts.[23] Teo goes on to suggest that postmodernism is manifested in a manner that is uniquely Hong Kong.[24] This uniqueness is defined as lying in 'Hong Kong's existence in the modern world as a colonial outpost of the British Empire in the heart of East Asia.'[25] With the 1997 handover resulting in the loss of its British colonial status and its 'gradual assimilation into mainland Chinese culture'[26], the uniqueness of Hong Kong cinema will come to an "end", or as Stokes and Hoover put it, enter into "crisis". It is worth stressing, of course, that Teo's book was written prior to the

handover and published in 1997. Nearly fifteen years later, new questions need to be asked. With the circumstances of a completely self-governing autonomous system running Hong Kong, China's phenomenally fast growing economy that is so 'decisively ahead of its European counterparts, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom'[27], and the increasing introduction and prevalence of western practices within the Chinese media industries, what impact has this had on the unique form of filmmaking known as Hong Kong cinema?

Another landmark study of Hong Kong cinema published in the late 1990s, Stokes and Hoover's *City on Fire*[28] takes a different approach from that of Teo, and primarily seeks to observe certain trends in the Hong Kong film industry, and examine the problems that the authors perceive to be hindering the industry. Like Teo's book, it is largely a product of the time it was written, and much of its argument reflects the same anxiety over the political handover that also characterises Teo's history. This is perhaps best exemplified when Stokes and Hoover argue that Hong Kong cinema in the late 1990s is at a 'historic conjuncture where new patterns of language, time and space, place and identity, and meaning itself are emerging'[29] and that Hong Kong itself is in crisis. In their first chapter Stokes and Hoover present their readers with a solid account of a complex social situation in Hong Kong through a chronological assessment of Hong Kong's economic development.[30] Subsequently, and similar to Teo's approach, they study Hong Kong cinema from its inception, mainly looking at the cinema from an industrial perspective that concentrates on assessing the industry's production system. By focusing on key personnel such as Run Run Shaw, Loke Wan-tho, King Hu, John Woo, Stanley Tong and Michael Hui, alongside the performances of major film production companies such as Shaw Brothers, Cathay Studios and the later established Golden Harvest, the authors pinpoint the characteristics presented by the industry and the issues lying therein, especially its filmmaking system.

Perhaps the most interesting part for the purposes of my own argument is how Stokes and Hoover evaluate the period from the late 1980s through the 1990s. Here they cite the influence of the triads' infiltration of the industry that occurred in Hong Kong during this period.[31] They argue that organised crime dealt a critical blow to the industry and damaged the efforts of key personnel, both filmmakers and actors, as a result of criminal activities carried out by the triads, typically extortion, death threats, robbery and contract killings.[32] Hoover and Stokes also debate the theory that the industry was controlled by the triads, which was not only the belief of some individuals like actress Karen Mok and director Mabel Cheung Yuen-ting, but in fact led them to claim that triad infiltration resulted in increased film output for a time.[33] Hoover and Stokes's argument provides us with this premise when considering internal and external influence on the development of Hong Kong cinema in the pre-1997 era. However, there are additional aspects such as the disappearance of major production houses like Shaw Brothers and Cinema City, rampant piracy, the Asian financial crisis and others that deserve to be examined. Accordingly, these aspects are considered in detail in the discussion of the first of my hypotheses, which I will outline shortly.

Another influential introduction to Hong Kong cinema is David Bordwell's *Planet Hong Kong*.[34] Bordwell's focus on the aesthetic and formal conventions differs substantially from the more socio-economic and historical approach provided by other scholars. His argument is that while popular genre filmmaking in Hong Kong is formally regarded as mass-produced commercial filmmaking, it also achieves 'genuine artistry' [35] . Bordwell suggests that there is no clear boundary between commercial/popular cinema and art house cinema because both cinemas ultimately come to be commercial or marketing related.[36] Films such as Jackie Chan's 1983 *Project A*, Hark Tsui's 1991 *Once upon a Time in China*, or John Woo's 1986 *A Better Tomorrow* are cited for their inventiveness and 'sheer craftsmanship that elevate the films to the level of high art'.[37] Furthermore, Bordwell compares the work of Wong

Kar-wai, Ann Hui and Stanley Kwan with Western auteurs such as Hitchcock and John Ford supporting his assertion that art house cinema is perhaps not always driven by profit but is certainly oriented by the market.[38] Owing to this nature, art house films' traditions, genres and conventions are decidedly influenced.[39] I shall return to these ideas particularly in my later case study of Wong Kar-wai, which allows me to consider his filmmaking techniques post-1997 from a market-oriented perspective. In contrast, most of the existing scholarship of his work is primarily intent on exploring his films' 'visual richness, complexity, thematic portrayal and postmodern appeal of Wong's cinema'[40]: Stephen Teo and Peter Brunette's eponymously entitled books *Wong Kar-wai* fall into this latter category,[41] while Mengyang Cui's *The Cinema of Wong Kar Wai* expands the analysis of Wong's films approach into a broader discourse of debating notions of cultural identity.[42] All three of these texts are further examined and discussed during my case study of Wong.

Debating Post-1997 Hong Kong's Identity

Given the particularity that, on July 1 1997, Hong Kong changed its political status from that of a British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong's identity in the cinematic context has remained one of the most debated topics among film scholars. Poshek Fu and David Desser's edited collection *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*,[43] Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu's anthology *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*,[44] and Esther Yau's collection *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*,[45] are all largely focused on this particular subject. Throughout these books there is a consensus that Hong Kong identity can no longer be as easily separated geographically and culturally from the Mainland as it could prior to 1997. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu discusses the construction of Hong Kong's identity, and also how global film culture is influenced by Hong Kong's transfer from colony to post-colony. He argues that by considering Hong Kong's significant and unique historical transition, Chinese history

will undoubtedly have implications in terms of its cinemas' development.[46] In a similar fashion, Yingjin Zhang evaluates Hong Kong cinema, alongside that of the Mainland and Taiwan, and argues that all three Chinese cinemas have utilised their idiosyncratic cultures to create transnational cinematic imaginaries based upon regional collaborations.[47] Zhang points out that the three cinemas have become transnational in all aspects in order to compete with increasing globalisation in the new millennium.[48]

Ruby Cheung Wai-yee's PhD thesis *Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002: The Quest for Identity during the Transition* offers another perspective in its attempt at defining Hong Kong's identity in the cinematic context within the period when the political transition was approaching and subsequently taking place in Hong Kong. The reason that Cheung looks into the chosen period is in the belief that as opposed to an overnight political change, the transition presents a protracted and profound ideological influence, having an effect long before its eventual arrival and long after its occurrence. In order to understand such a profound ideological impact on Hong Kongers' identity and, as a result, the representations of their identity in the cinema, the thesis provides an in-depth textual analyses of eight specific films from representative film directors: Ann Hui's *Boat People* (1982), *Song of the Exile* (1990) and *Ordinary Heroes* (1999), Wong Kar-wai's *Days of Being Wild* (1990) and *Happy Together* (1997), and Fruit Chan's *Made in Hong Kong* (1997), *Durian Durian* (2000) and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2002). Through close examinations of these eight films, Cheung suggests that Hong Kongers' self-identities are alterable, indeterminate and interminable given the situational and diasporic consciousness of Hong Kongers.[49] Following on from Cheung's argument, my thesis intends to explore whether this ideological impact also encouraged many Hong Kong filmmakers to represent Hong Kong's reconciliation with the Mainland in their films and as a consequence, Hong Kong cinema has adapted itself in the wake of the handover to spawn new content and new styles of filmmaking.

Vivian P.Y. Lee's *Hong Kong Cinema since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* covers broadly the same period as Cheung's thesis, but adopting a different focus. Lee traces the nostalgic treatment adopted by post-1997 Hong Kong films in their cinematic representations.[50] She defines this trend of nostalgic manifestation reflected by post-1997 Hong Kong films as 'post-nostalgic' and argues that it differs from the characteristics described by what Fredric Jameson has called 'postmodern nostalgia'[51] because it reveals a different range of cultural and filmic practices and it serves to use it in different ways and purposes from that discussed by Teo, namely the earlier Hong Kong nostalgic genre of the 1960s.[52] To further elaborate this argument, Lee chooses different generations of Hong Kong filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai, Ann Hui, Wong Ching-po and Lee Kung-lok as case studies and the films directed by these filmmakers such as *In the Mood for Love* (2000), *Ordinary Heroes* (1999), *Fu Bo* (2003) and *Isabella* (2006) for analysis.[53] These films represent different genres such as romantic melodrama or social realism and embrace different cultural representations. In so doing, Lee attempts to unravel the complex topos of post-1997 Hong Kong's local identity and "nationhood".

Apart from eloquently defining 'post-nostalgic' cinematic representations of post handover Hong Kong cinema, Lee discusses emerging trends and new developments in the industry. One trend that deserves to be noted according to Lee is the 'cinematic comeback'[54]of Taiwanese commercial films.[55] These successful Taiwanese commercial art films benefited considerably from backing in the form of production and distribution support from Hong Kong filmmakers. This trend of increasing involvement between the Hong Kong and Taiwan film industries heralds, according to Lee, marks another turning point in Hong Kong cinema.[56] This could turn out to be very significant, if Hong Kong is indeed precipitated into becoming a leading centre for 'artistic creativity and acting talents'.[57] However, whether that which Lee observes and predicts is a direct result of, or connected with, the 1997 political transition is debatable due to a number of factors. Not least is the prevalence of inter industry co-operation across the whole of the Asian

region that is a result of the increasing globalisation of all industries. In the specific instance of Taiwan-Hong Kong co-operation there could well be a case to make for the influence of the handover. The increased access to Mainland markets on the part of Hong Kong that has resulted from the handover must offer a new route into that market for Taiwanese filmmakers and in particular one that would be easier than the direct Taiwan-Mainland route given the historical tensions that have existed between the two territories. Any element of doubt concerning a film's suitability for the local audience must be alleviated to some extent by the direct involvement of Hong Kong in the film's production given Hong Kong's new found trusted status as an SAR of China.

Another quintessential work that deserves a close consideration is Yingchi Chu's *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self*.[58] Chu considers Hong Kong, within a triangular relationship between Hong Kong and its former British coloniser, and between Hong Kong and the Chinese motherland. Chu argues that these sets of relationships are the key determinant towards understanding and analysing the cultural identity of Hong Kong cinema throughout the period of Hong Kong's rule by Britain and subsequently, resulting in Hong Kong cinema's diasporic, 'quasi-national'[59] and trans-regional identity.[60] "Quasi-nation" defines Hong Kong's interdependent political status with Britain and Mainland China, and the quasi-national characteristics exhibited by Hong Kong cinema that indicate an ambivalence based on the exclusion and the inclusion of Chineseness that lies in Hong Kong's cinematic imagination. Even today, it is perhaps more this unique position that lends the concept of "quasi-nation" to the former colony, independently of the SAR status afforded to it by the PRC.

Prior to the handover, Chu argues that Hong Kong cinema exhibited a more pronounced "national" characteristic.[61] Chu cites the activities and priorities of local film archives, film awards, film festivals and publications, which tend to assess films from a perspective rooted within specifically local political, economic and social contexts. Chu also mentions Hollywood's influence on the local culture and yet a simultaneous

preference for Cantonese-language films that aesthetically present a unique Hong Kong image.[62] Chu's approach is mainly informed by Andrew Higson's influential article 'The Concept of National Cinema',[63] which suggests that the concept of national cinema 'has been appropriated in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons: there is not a single universally accepted discourse of national cinema.'[64] Higson believes the concept can be categorised into four different approaches,[65] one of which is a 'criticism-led approach'[66]. Higson writes, '…there is what may be called a criticism-led approach to national cinema, which tends to reduce national cinema to the terms of a quality art cinema, a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural and/or modernist heritage of a particular nation state, rather than one which appeals to the desires and fantasies of the popular audiences.'[67] To define Hong Kong's identity as exhibited by Hong Kong cinema after the handover, Chu[68] examines the status of criticism and concludes that critics still review post-handover Hong Kong cinema as a separate cultural, economical and political body distinct from the Mainland, despite the fact that 'Hong Kong cinema is becoming more quasi-national than it had been in the colonial period'[69].

Chu devotes special attention to an examination of Hong Kong cinema's "quasi-national" identity after 1997 when the triangular relationship changed as a result of the departure of the British colonial mechanism and the transfer of Hong Kong to official Chinese rule under the 'one country, two systems' policy. In order to achieve this, Chu proposes a closer scrutiny of a number of aspects: the first that is considered is whether the identity exhibited by post-1997 Hong Kong cinema reveals more characteristics of Chinese national cinema because of the handover; the second aspect is an attempt to find out if the cinematic representation of Hong Kong history, landscape and cultural identity has changed after 1997; a third aspect looks at whether Hong Kong cinema has developed any different cinematic techniques, genres, conventions and narratives since 1997; the fourth aspect approaches the Hong Kong film industry with a view to contemplating whether there have been any changes and shifts in the industry

and film markets; whilst the fifth aspect focuses on whether there are any significant changes in film criticism.[70]

In Chu's assessment, no new censorship regulations have been introduced into the local film industry, nor is there any evidence to indicate that local filmmakers' freedom of expression has been restricted.[71] Given that her assessment was published in 2003, in the later chapters of my thesis I intend to re-assess if the "uninhibited" and "free-spirited" creation that Server saw threatened in the late 1990s has been subsequently hampered by the change of government. Chu also argues that there have been no radical changes which can be discovered in the stylistic elements of post-1997 Hong Kong films.[72] This is justified by Chu through a detailed assessment of narratives, genre, plots and themes of several films that were made post 1997.[73] In this respect my own assessment will differ somewhat from Chu's evaluation. I shall suggest that there has indeed been a direct influence on the cinematic style of Hong Kong cinema post 1997 that needs to be acknowledged. This argument consists of a series of different aspects that can be summarised as follows.

One aspect of the effect of the handover, which my subsequent chapters will deal with extensively, and which I will therefore mention here only in passing, is manifested in a change in the filmmaking initiatives and practices of directors. A second aspect of the handover's effect lies in the cinematic presentation of the films made after 1997, for example the way in which the films indicate the Hong Kong filmmakers' re-exploration of the territory's relationship with the Mainland. In examining this aspect, Chu argues that 'Hong Kong's return has not encouraged the local film industry to explore further the territory's relationship with China in the cinematic space'[74], which is certainly true for some of the films considered, such as Zeng Jinchang's *Intruder* (1997), which is compared with the pre-1997 film Johnny Mak's *Long Arm of the Law* (1984).[75] *Intruder* still portrays the Hong Kongers' fear of the "invasion" of the Mainlanders.

However, films like *Needing You* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Kar-fai, 2000), *Love For All Seasons* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Kar-fai, 2002), *Golden Chicken* (dir. Samson Chiu Leung-chun, 2002), *Perhaps Love* (dir. Peter Chan Ho-sun, 2005) and *Mr. Cinema* (dir. Samson Chiu Leung-chun, 2007) have all revealed the local film industry's predilection for exploring the territory's relationship with the Mainland and Mainlanders. Some of these films have portrayed Mainlander characters as caring figures, often with the figure being cloaked in mystery, some have located their viewpoint to Mainland China to explore "reverse migration", namely exploring the situation when Hong Kongers come to Mainland China, how they cope with the life style there and how they connect with the locals.

Another aspect of the change is the percentage of Mainland performers appearing in Hong Kong films made after 1997. Prior to 1997 Hong Kong films rarely cast actors or actresses from the Mainland, a situation that has been reversed over the past decade. Stephen Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* featured pop icon Vicky Zhao in a leading role, Wong Kar-wai's *2046* cast the so called "Mou's ladies"[76] Ziyi Zhang and Dong Jie, Vicky Zhao also stars in Ann Hui's *Jade Goddess of Mercy* (2003) and *The Postmodern Life of My Aunt* (2006), while Gordon Chan Ka-seung's *Painted Skin* (2008) employed several Mainland A-list stars such as Zhou Xun, Vicky Zhao, Chen Kun and Betty Sun. This change in casting choices can be seen to have had more fundamental influences on the performance style within Hong Kong cinema more generally.

Transregional/Transnational/Translocal Imagination and Globalisation

As the previous section has indicated, Hong Kong cinema after 1997 has been discussed by scholars in relation to a multitude of both national and transnational influences. Within media and cultural studies, "transnationalism" has increasingly become the centre of critical interest, with attention being focused upon the definition of the term, and the process and the outcome of transnationalisation. This extends to the

interpenetration of cultures, cross-border collaboration, the concepts of hybridity, transformation of identity and transnational imagination/communities. Publications include Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake's editing of *Global/Local: Cultural Productions and the Transnational Imaginary*,[77]Steven Vertovec's *Transnationalism*,[78] Steve Tupai Francis's *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives*[79] and *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* edited by Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist.[80]

In film studies, collections such as *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* edited by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden,[81]Andrew Higson's essay 'The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema', [82] Tim Bergfelder's article 'National, Transnational or Supranational Cinema?: Rethinking European Film Studies',[83] and Yingjin Zhang's article 'Transnationalism and Translocality in Chinese Cinema',[84] all argue to move beyond an exclusive focus on "national cinema" given that cinematic practices have developed, and expanded resulting from cross-border circulation of capital, technology, information and human resources (such as creative talent).

Attempting to define the difference between transnationalisation and globalisation is a central concern. However, the relationship between the two terms has always appeared to be ambiguous. Steven Vertovec describes this relationship as 'facilitated, but not caused',[85] and suggests that 'enhanced transnational connections … represent a key manifestation of globalisation'[86] and change within any aspects of globalisation will have implications for transnational forms and activities.[87] In other words, globalisation and transnationalisation are inseparably interconnected.

Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-fai's edited collection *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film* provides a conceptual approach to understanding "transnationality". [88] The editors argue that definitions of "transnationality" often bear

relation to the cultural and economic flows of globalisation, the erosion of the nation/state, the world with no border and de-territorialisation.[89] However, in order to conceptualise the cinematic phenomena of what Hunt and Leung regard as 'the transgression of "national cinema"'[90], they propose "transvergent" as being a more appropriate term than "transnational".[91] Originally coined in 2002 to advance the contra-distinct meaning of convergence and divergence,[92] according to Hunt and Leung, the term "transvergent" circumscribes 'cinema as a far-flung industrial practice and praxis'[93], and depicts how cinema 'crosses lines, zigzags, derails, re-rails, re-routes, jumps from one continent to another, [relying] on artifice to create its imaginary spaces'[94]. The films analysed in the later chapters of this book exemplify how trans-Asian productions in the new millennium fit a "transvergent" paradigm.[95] Hunt and Leung[96] argue that to locate East Asian cinema within a geographic range or, as they put it, a 'geographical given'[97] is too simplistic, and that cinema always remains an 'idea in process'[98]. This has everything to do with the fact that historically Asia has always been a 'free floating signifier'[99], where 'regional relationships and identities'[100]are constantly redefined by factors such as 'colonialism, post-colonialism, multinational capitalism, globalisation, and the complex and multifaceted interplay between the Asian Pacific and the Euro-American Pacific'[101]. Hunt and Leung's approach to understanding East Asian cinema provides new frameworks that help assess filmmaking practices in East Asia.

When it comes to discussing transnationalism in Chinese cinemas, Yingjin Zhang's view should be taken into account.[102] Zhang argues that, given the problematic status in applying the notion of national cinema in the Chinese context, specifically with the inclusion of Hong Kong and Taiwan, 'translocality'[103]clarifies the scale of collaboration of film production, distribution, exhibition and reception among the three Chinese cinemas, namely Mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan.[104] "Translocal productions" becomes a more accurate description to describe contemporary Chinese cinema, rather

than what the media coins "transnational blockbusters". Zhang discusses Chen Kaige's 2005 martial arts feature *The Promise* to argue that the companies who were involved in financing and producing the film were not national enterprises but individual private businesses; and secondly that the companies and personnel who were involved in the film did not represent their nations or their national traditions, and thus it is too simplistic and problematic to conceptualise films like *The Promise* as transnational productions.[105] What Zhang's argument offers is a valid perspective for this thesis's investigation to adopt particularly when it intends to examine Hong Kong filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai, and his role in a regional and transnational context.

The understanding of transregionalisation, translocalisation, transnationalisation, globalisation, and the complex differentiation among these definitions, have provided a theoretical framework for my thesis in its study of the landscape of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema's developments, given that Hong Kong, along with Taiwan, the PRC, Japan and South Korea, have emerged as centres for international trade and film productions. The films from these regions have continuously been rewarded by film festivals at the same time as achieving impressive box office receipts. Film companies from East Asia have become 'major players at festivals, markets and on Western screens'[106]. In order to understand and investigate to what extent the development of Hong Kong cinema has been affected by the transnational flow of goods, capital and talent it is vital to distinguish this from other factors, which have also helped to decide the level of the influence that the handover has had on the Hong Kong cinema's progress.

To understand post-1997 Hong Kong film industry's role in a broader understanding of a re-emerging East Asian cinema, Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh's book *East Asian Screen Industries* offers additional knowledge.[107] The book looks at East Asian film industries' industrial and aesthetic collaborations and outlines some of the more crucial changes and ongoing developments within each industry. According to

Davis and Yeh, East Asian film industries have started to experience crucial changes from the late 1990s onwards in order to reclaim gradually diminishing domestic markets.[108] These changes can be summarised into three facets, one of which manifest itself as "benchmark filmmaking practices".[109] These practices are represented by three very different forms.[110] The first is exemplified by South Korea, where the industry has been forced to change its production, marketing and distribution systems in order to compete with Hollywood imports since the state removal of barriers to the distribution of foreign films;[111] the second is exemplified by the trend in 'international co-operation between Chinese cosmopolitan and Hollywood majors'[112], an example is cited as Taiwanese director Ang Lee's martial arts Mandarin-language film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), which gathered its performers, finance and distribution forces from cross borders (Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Mainland and the USA).[113] The third form is demonstrated by the *Infernal Affairs* trilogy (2002, 2003), where its benchmark practice lies in 'high production values and regional influence'[114]. Davis and Yeh's book also illustrates that the "benchmark filmmaking practices" cannot be simply interpreted as 'breaking box-office records'[115]; they also exhibit 'new patterns for further, long-term activity'[116].

Another facet of the crucial change within East Asian film industries which differs from "benchmark filmmaking practices" is the new localism that has emerged since early 2000.[117] This trend in filmmaking practice has no intention to outperform Hollywood and only attempts to appeal to local and regional audiences' tastes.[118] The trend invokes 'a new breed of local production'[119], which embraces specific styles and resources targeting local, regional and national markets. These productions rely in the main on local subjects, narratives, genres and stars; however the trend does not exclude some key elements of global entertainment production, such as script development and high standards of digital technology. This new localism in Davis and Yeh's opinion is exhibited by some major Hollywood film production companies who have set up their

production partnership in Asia in order to produce and distribute films that specifically target regional and national markets in Asia.[120] There are several potential issues that lie within this local-Hollywood partnership, for example retention of ownership (particularly as it can directly affect the level of localism represented by the film) and the apparent inability of Hong Kong's localism to be 'translated'.

Stephen Chow's 2001 kung fu comedy *Shaolin Soccer* is a good example for this uneven translation process. After Miramax bought the film's distribution rights for American markets, they re-cut and re-dubbed the original version (see Chapter Two for a detailed analysis) so that when the film was finally released to American audiences, the originality that represents Hong Kong's localism had faded to a great extent. The poor box office returns in the US subsequently reinforced the view that Miramax's changes had failed to do the film justice. Whether this is a peculiarity of the particular Hong Kong localism as presented by Chow or indeed whether it applies to other Hong Kong cinematic offerings is a theme that is returned to later in the thesis. East Asian "localism" illustrates the possibility of unification between different regions in Asia despite political, economic and cultural differences. They adopt international norms of production and consumption (norms of production that are mainly manifest as adaptations of Hollywood modes of production such as 'market research, script development, completion bonds and meticulous post-production with digitally enhanced attractions'[121]), however they are not entirely Hollywoodised. They encourage localness or, as Davis and Yeh describe it, 'indigenous film craft'[122], sometimes fuelled with nationalism.[123]

The third facet manifests itself as an increasing trend in the interdependence of film industries within Asia and as a result a new form of Pan-Asia cinema has also emerged.[124] The tendency towards Pan-Asian cinema, according to Davis and Yeh, is designed to sustain commercially viable markets with its exact forms varying from

talent sharing and cross-border investment to co-productions and market consolidation through distribution and investment in foreign infrastructure.[125] The general principles of Pan-Asian collaboration are firstly to exchange production crafts across borders and cultures and, by re-orienting the screen industry across the Asian region, help consolidate a broader range of audience within Asia as a response to Hollywood's hegemony.[126]

From the above assessment of emerging trends in East Asia film industries, it is apparent that Hong Kong has played a fairly crucial role. Several factors have occurred across East Asia which have impacted upon these emerging trends. First, there is the decline of individual cinemas as a result of both internal and external factors. The film industries in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, Korea, Japan and Thailand all suffered an economic downturn and consequently they have sought external financial opportunities and production support, yet mostly from within their immediate geographical vicinity. Secondly, domestic markets in East Asia have been threatened by Hollywood blockbusters. In order to compete with US majors and win back home markets, each film industry has tended to either dedicate itself to producing films that can attain "Hollywood" style and technology, or they have concentrated on producing films that retain local stars, culture, styles and genres to appeal to the local audience's taste. Thirdly, the availability of proper domestic support, described by Davis and Yeh as 'institutionalisation of regional confabs'[127], has allowed some regions and nations like Hong Kong, Mainland China and Korea to form organisations and forge plans between filmmakers, governments and investors to help with the financing and distribution of film projects and the regulation of film markets.

All of these factors have encouraged and sustained a healthy growth of East Asian cinema. In addressing the impact of increasing global economic change and how this change impinges upon contemporary Hong Kong filmmaking practices and further, how

Hong Kong cinema integrates with global cinema, Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam have provided a compelling perspective. In their view, as a result of the changing global climate, some independent Hong Kong filmmakers have managed to chart routes towards eventually producing films in Western regions, whilst some have stayed locally based to explore various trans-local niches for their filmmaking practices.[128] Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar have noted the issue in similar fashion, but instead of restricting their approach solely to the dimension of contemporary Hong Kong, they expand the boundaries into a broader picture of Chinese-language cinemas. Their aim is to rethink the relationship between the national and the transnational subject to global capital flow and growing multiculturalism. To this end they revisit cinematic texts and national identity within the discourse of how they are presented by Chinese cinemas in new conceptual environments.[129]

Michael Curtin's *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* provides a thorough investigation of the way Chinese media industries have been affected by globalisation processes.[130] Analysing various media platforms, such as film and TV in Southeast Asian regions, from the perspective that these media have experienced a dynamic shift in an era of increasing globalisation, Curtin suggests that since the 1980s these media have gradually courted a wider audience, and that Chinese media have become significant competitors to Hollywood.[131] Curtin specifies how the globalised environment and its opportunities have ignited dramatic changes and developments that consequently have resulted in an economically modernised and politically strengthened China and as a result Chinese markets have become globally vast and wealthy.[132] Growing markets allow media conglomerates to emerge and develop, which, in Curtin's opinion, shakes the 'very foundations of Hollywood's century-long hegemony'[133].

Curtin's summary of the history of Hong Kong's media industries clearly indicates how transnational patterns and practices have been influential in Hong Kong cinema for a

very long time.[134] For instance, his study of the Shaw Brothers, and their relocation of their companies initially from Shanghai, to Singapore and eventually Hong Kong, is shown to have been motivated by a series of social and environmental changes.[135] Predating more recent instances of globalisation, the Shaw Brothers developed a transnational distribution and exhibition chain, which courted Chinese audiences in the East Asian regions and consequently established Shaw Brothers as one of the largest integrated film production houses in the world.[136] This inherent tendency within Asian media practices towards the blurring of national boundaries established what has subsequently become one of the quintessential hallmarks of Asian cinema, namely its diffuse topography.

Methodology

In engaging with its subject my thesis employs a variety of tools, including analyses of the structures, patterns and processes lying within the productions of Hong Kong films through a study of the existing literature, the use of case studies and the proposal and debate of various hypotheses. These research methods are described and expanded upon as follows.

My methodology draws initially on the existing literature that I summarised in the previous sections, especially those aspects that concern the historical accounts of Hong Kong cinema and the development of the industry,[137] examinations of the identity and cultural representation of Hong Kong cinema in the postcolonial era,[138] how the nature of Hong Kong cinema is influenced by the increasing phenomenon of transnational collaboration among East Asian film industries[139] and how the global economic change has had an impact on Hong Kong cinema.[140] The importance of this literature lies in observing patterns in the development of the industrial structures and emerging trends in Hong Kong cinema by examining the activities and performances of the representative figures, films and studios, and thus forms an essential conceptual framework that leads

this thesis's investigation; additionally, it is important to set the studies within the conceptual and theoretical framework of transregionalisation, transnationalisation and globalisation, which have constituted very powerful forces for change that the development of Hong Kong cinema has faced since 1997.

In order to paint a more local picture of Hong Kong cinema from an industrial perspective, explore the impact that the 1997 handover has had on its development and discover what other factors could possibly have had an influence upon it, I propose five hypotheses that are designed to support my investigation. My first hypothesis postulates that Hong Kong cinema had already experienced a decline prior to the 1997 political transition, challenging or revising the sentiment expressed by scholars such as Teo, Stokes and Hoover, who have described Hong Kong cinema as a 'crisis cinema' or variously at an 'end' as a result of the political transition.[141] In order to test this hypothesis I shall assess the situation of the film industry during the decade prior to the handover by looking into the performances of the major film production companies like Shaw Brothers, D&B and Cinema City, and by comparison the production figures of smaller but active independent film production companies like Wong Kar-wai's Jet Tone films and Hark Tsui's Film Workshop. The economic status of the local film markets is also considered and in order to do so, I have analysed the activities of the chosen film production companies and statistical figures such as local box office takings and attendances based on the information and the data gathered from the secondary sources.

My second hypothesis is that in order to challenge its steep decline and search for strategies to revive its declining position, post-1997 Hong Kong cinema experimented with various means of "reconstruction" in that its filmmakers attempted to adopt the Hollywood filmmaking system, copy its production strategies and film formulae in order to produce "Hollywoodised" Hong Kong films in an effort to regain the local market that is mainly occupied by foreign films, amongst which Hollywood productions

have held the highest percentage of the market share (see Appendix: Chart 3). At the same time, a considerable number of independent film production companies and filmmakers devoted themselves to embracing local talent, culture and genres to create a new form of localised Hong Kong cinema.[142] Among these film production companies and filmmakers, some have stayed locally based, and some have expanded their filmmaking internationally, with both groups having achieved commercial and critical success at local and international level.

The adopted methodology for the second hypothesis is to assess the strategies and operations that were adopted by notable film personnel who have been comparatively successful, such as Johnnie To, Peter Chan Ho-sun and the Pang Brothers, together with discussions of the companies that these film personnel have founded, for instance Milkyway Image and Applause Pictures. I also assess the activities of the production, distribution and exhibition contexts of the films that obtained relatively high box office sales, which were produced by these filmmakers such as Johnnie To's *Running out of Time* (1999), the Pang Brothers' *The Eye* (2002), Samson Chiu Leung-chun's *Golden Chicken* (2002), Peter Chan's *Perhaps Love* (2005) and the *Infernal Affairs Trilogy* (2002, 2003). The intention in assessing these films in such contexts is to reflect whether they reveal changes in their filmmaking strategies in response to the political transition, or changes influenced by other factors. In this regard, I consider aspects such as how the films were made, whether they were based on carefully conceived plots, what film crews they employed and who financed the films. Secondly, consideration is given to whether the films have been distributed only locally, and if not, to what territories they have been distributed, and thirdly, how the films were received by local and international critics.

My third hypothesis argues that the political change since 1997 has resulted in an exploration of the conflicts between Mainland China and Hong Kong following the

handover. This exploration extends to the concerns that Hong Kong citizens have towards integration with Mainland China, and also expresses itself in the form of nostalgia as a psychological response to the need for redefining Hong Kong's identity. Many post-1997 Hong Kong films have revealed a tendency for cinematic exploration of Hong Kong's reconciliation with what Vivian P. Y. Lee considers to be the 'China factor'[143]. Some films articulate ambivalent relationships between characters that are respectively from Hong Kong and Mainland China in order to allegorise the relationship between the two territories. Additionally some films portray the situation of Hong Kongers to Mainland China when they migrate there. I argue that all these explorations exhibited by post-1997 Hong Kong films are a direct outcome of the political transition.

In order to test the third hypothesis I shall assess the themes, contents and styles of the relevant films and look into their commercial credits (local box office receipts) and critical credits (for example if they have received awards at film festivals, positive reviews by film critics).

My fourth hypothesis argues that since the transfer of sovereignty from Britain to the PRC in 1997, the political, economic and geographic interaction between Hong Kong and Mainland China has become less constrained. One obvious benefit of less constrained political, economic and geographic interaction between the two territories for the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema was the implementation of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). CEPA is a free trade agreement first signed by Mainland China and Hong Kong in June 2003 and implemented in January 2004.[144] The intentions of signing this agreement are to 'open up huge markets for Hong Kong goods and services, and enhance the already close economic cooperation and integration between the Mainland and Hong Kong'.[145] The agreement, after its implementation in 2004, covered three broad areas, namely 'trade in goods', 'trade in services', and 'trade and investment facilitation'.[146] 'Trade in goods'

offers tariff free treatment to Hong Kong goods when imported into the Mainland market; in a similar fashion, 'trade in services' gives Hong Kong service suppliers preferential treatment in entering into the Mainland market in various service areas; 'trade and investment facilitation' intends to enhance co-operation in various trade and investment areas by both sides in order to improve the overall business environment.[147] The regulations and measures that relate to Hong Kong motion pictures are listed under the category of 'audiovisual' services sector that is covered by 'trade in services'.[148] Under the implemented terms of the CEPA, Hong Kong-Mainland co-produced motion pictures are exempt from the Mainland foreign film quota; the ratio of Hong Kong workers in co-productions goes up from 50% to 70%; Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions would not need to be completely filmed in Mainland China and stories would not necessarily need to be China-related; CEPA terms have also increased permissible Hong Kong investor stakes in cinemas in Mainland China from 50% to 90%.[149] CEPA also permitted Hong Kong companies to establish wholly-owned distribution companies in the Mainland.[150] It also permitted Hong Kong companies to provide professional technical services for cable television networks on a pilot basis, however only within Cantonese dialect speaking areas, and for television dramas that are co-produced by the Mainland and Hong Kong, which are permitted to be broadcasted and distributed in the same way as Mainland produced television dramas.[151] The purpose of CEPA is noted by Davis and Yeh as being to 'lower trade barriers, and phase-in measures to reduce obstacles to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) imports, such as films, videos, television programming and cinema infrastructure'[152] into the PRC. In Davis's recently published paper 'Market and Marketization in the China Film Business',[153] the purpose of the implementation is also cited as being 'to integrate China, Hong Kong, and Macau through a package of changes providing favorable conditions for products and services from the latter two'.[154] CEPA has undoubtedly encouraged collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland in terms of production, talent sharing and financial backing. It has also opened up more

opportunities for both lands' film markets to interact at the distribution stage but at the same time it presents a situation that could prove to be something of a challenge in terms of having to attain the approval of the relevant Mainland authority.

I evaluate this fourth hypothesis by looking at the Individual films (for instance the third installment of *Infernal Affairs* [2003] and *Perhaps Love* [2005]) and film personnel (such as Peter Chan Ho-sun) that have benefited from CEPA and providing analyses of their production and distribution activities. I also look at the statistical figures for Hong Kong and Mainland co-productions and the numbers of Hong Kong films that were released in the Mainland market (theatrical release only). The numbers of film companies that have been established are also assessed along these lines.

My fifth hypothesis suggests that the frequency of collaboration in terms of film production, distribution and exhibition between Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Europe, Hong Kong and Hollywood is more prevalent since the handover than pre-1997. I shall debate whether this has been a "benefit" of the political transition or is simply the impact of increased globalisation. This hypothesis is difficult to quantify, there being no hard and fast figures on which to base an objective evaluation, and as such the hypothesis is evaluated in a more speculative manner in the discussions of the previously mentioned film production companies such as Applause Pictures, active filmmakers like the Pang Brothers and films that are applicable in this context.

In order to further debate my five hypotheses, particularly the fifth one, when applied to specific filmmaking practice in Hong Kong since 1997, and in order to assess the role that post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has played in a regional, transnational and global context, case studies on selected filmmakers (Wong Kar-wai, Stephen Chow, and Fruit Chan) are undertaken through an examination of their selected film oeuvres. The major purpose of these case studies is to illustrate how the various strategies of the selected

filmmakers' were transformed from those of abiding within the hitherto conventional system of Hong Kong filmmaking into an approach leading to the creation of a new global system encompassing financial aspects, film creation and marketing strategies. In so doing, a tactic of comparing pre-1997 and post-1997 films from each selected filmmaker in the context of their production, distribution and exhibition has been adopted for the case studies. These case studies also contain the necessary minimum analyses of the selected films' themes, contents and styles necessary to set them in their industrial contexts.

The analyses of the selected films' themes, contents and styles constitutes the primary resources of this research, however owing to a relative dearth of quantifying data, the key statistics, key personnel interviews and selected films' critical reviews that are used to support the research questions of this thesis are derived largely from secondary research resources. Among these data however, some have been collected from sources such as the Hong Kong Film Service Office and Hong Kong Film Archive where I conducted field research during visits to Hong Kong. The remainder has been collected from books and journal publications, film magazines or via internet access.

Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of six chapters, the progression of which is intended to address the extent to which Hong Kong's postcolonial political transition has shaped the nature of Hong Kong cinema and its filmmaking practices, particularly how Hong Kong filmmakers responded to Hong Kong's official return to the People's Republic of China. This introductory chapter, which explains the detailed aims and scope of the thesis and introduces the methodology adopted in order to conduct the investigation also, and importantly, examines what are perhaps the more critically significant conceptual frameworks that are deeply related to the study of Hong Kong cinema. Following on

from this, Chapter One presents an overview of the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, firstly in order to engage in a debate within the existing body of scholarship that claims the decline of the film industry is due to the political transition. Secondly, this chapter observes and accesses the emerging trends and developments lying within the production methods adopted by the notable film personnel and the distribution and exhibition patterns exhibited by the films since the political handover. This is approached against the backdrop of systematically addressing the film policies that were introduced since 1997, and examining the status of censorship since 1997, in order to examine whether these emerging trends and developments have directly resulted from the political transition or are caused by other factors.

As proposed and stated above, my five hypotheses based on visiting the existing conceptual context of the noteworthy aspects posed by Hong Kong cinema that have resulted from the handover, are examined thoroughly in Chapter One. I also map a brief historical account of the condition of Hong Kong cinema from an industrial aspect ten years prior to the handover. This is a necessity because it will serve firstly as the historical context for examining developments since the handover, and secondly it will provide evidence to help fuel the debate as to whether the decline that occurred in the industry had indeed started long before the handover. The remaining four hypotheses are constructed against a multi-faceted background, including their consideration in the geographical context through the relationship of the Hong Kong film industry with the local, Mainland China, the regional (Southeast Asia) and global (Europe and Hollywood). In so doing, films and key industry personnel considered representative of the emerging trends and developments (as elaborated in the Methodology section earlier in this chapter) have been chosen for examination.

Although Chapter One is central in establishing an illustration of the Hong Kong film industry's decline that had already come into being prior to the political handover, in addition to addressing the extent to which Hong Kong's postcolonial political transition

has shaped the nature of Hong Kong cinema and its filmmaking practices in the decade following Hong Kong's official return, it is also necessary to further assess the hypotheses, and in particular the fifth one, by approaching the work of representative Hong Kong directors/filmmakers in some detail. For this reason I have chosen Stephen Chow, Wong Kar-wai, and Fruit Chan as the subjects of three case studies that are conducted in the subsequent three chapters. As explained in the Methodology section, these three filmmakers represent different generations, and also exemplify distinctly different genres of filmmaking practices. Specifically looking into each of these directors/filmmakers' oeuvre of produced films therefore enables me to examine how their filmmaking practices have or have not been influenced by the handover. Wong Kar-wai and Stephen Chow had produced several commercially and critically acclaimed films prior to the handover and therefore their pre-1997 works will also be encompassed within the discussion to serve as an anchor point from which to make comparison with their post-1997 works. This is also considered as being necessary in order to address what, if any, changes in their filmmaking practices have resulted from the handover or from other possible factors. The final chapter contains my conclusions with the aim of summarising the findings and concluding the arguments that have been addressed throughout the thesis.

Notes

[1] Lee Server, *Asian Pop Cinema: Bombay to Tokyo* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1999), p. 13.
[2] http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/china/203730.htm, accessed 16 July 2010.
[3] http://www.china.org.cn/english/features/china/203730.htm, accessed 16 July 2010.
[4] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 34.
[5] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 34.
[6] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 34.
[7] According to Davis and Yeh, *Infernal Affairs III* earned RMB 36 million on the mainland and topped the Hong Kong annual box office chart with HK$30 million, see Davis and Yeh's *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 34.
[8] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).
[9] Vivian P.Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[10] See Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu's *East Asian Screen Industries*; see also Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-fai, *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transitional Connections on Film* (London and New

York: I.B.Tauris Press, 2008).
[11] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); see also Vivian P.Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke:Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); see also Ruby Cheung Wai-yee, *Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002: The Quest for Identity during the Transition*, PhD thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2008.
[12] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 245.
[13] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, p. 245.
[14] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997).
[15] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 36.
[16] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 36.
[17] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 243.
[18] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 243.
[19] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 246-255.
[20] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 246-254.
[21] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 246-252.
[22] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 244.
[23] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 248-252.
[24] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 248-250.
[25] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 248.
[26] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 251.
[27] Michael Curtin, 'Introduction', in *Cinema Journal*, Issue 49, no. 3, Spring 2010, p. 117.
[28] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999).
[29] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 36.
[30] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 1-16.
[31] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 30-36.
[32] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 30-32.
[33] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 32.
[34] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and The Art of Entertainment* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).
[35] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, p. 2.
[36] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, pp. 5-13.
[37] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, p. 4-5.
[38] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, p. 6.
[39] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, p. 6.
[40] Sherry Xiaorui Xu, 'A Journey to the West: Hong Kong Film Auteur Wong Kar-wai's Response to Globalization?', in *The ACAH&ACSS Conference Proceedings*, p. 361.
[41] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005); see also Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005)
[42] Mengyang Cui, *The Cinema of Wong Kar Wai: Chinese and Western Culture Differences in Narrative Cinemas* (Australia: Universal Publishers, 2007).
[43] Poshek Fu and David Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
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[45] Esther Ching-mei Yau, *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
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Chapter One: "Creative Reconstruction": The Development of Hong Kong Cinema Before and After 1997

Debating the Possibility of a Transition-Inspired Decline within the Industry

In her article 'Postcolonial Hong Kong Cinema: Utilitarianism and (Trans)Local', Laikwan Pang notes that the Hong Kong film industry 'experienced a drastic deterioration, manifested in a sharp plummet in the numbers of annual productions and box office receipts'.[1] This decline in fact had already begun from approximately 1992 (see Appendix: Chart 1, Chart 2 and Table 2), at least four years prior to the political handover, partially as a result of the termination of production at major film production houses such as Shaw Brothers, D&B and Cinema City. In fact from the 1980s the Shaw Brothers' widely acknowledged dominant grip on the Hong Kong film industry had been gradually loosening. At its peak in the 1960s Shaw Brothers would commence production of a new film every nine days, with twelve films in production at any one time, and typically each film's shooting only taking an average of forty days.[2] By comparison, at the start of the 1980s, not only were most of Shaw Brothers studios used for television production, the company was forced to sell 70 per cent of its exhibition and distribution facilities; by the end of the 1980s, Shaw Brothers had stopped producing films and started to show films made by its competitors in its own exhibition chain simply in order to 'live'.[3]

Three key factors are assumed to have led to the decline of the Shaw Brothers' "empire". It was firstly due, as Yingchi Chu has noted, to a broader decline in the South-East Asian film market in the late 1970s.[4] As a film major that relied heavily on exporting its productions into South-East Asian film markets, Shaw Brothers suffered potentially fatal losses as a result. Secondly, according to Poshek Fu,[5] Shaw Brothers organised their productions in assembly lines and did not encourage too much 'artistic innovation'[6]. Such a system restrained spontaneous creativity, which gradually resulted in the departure of many talents, such as Raymond Chow and Leonard Ho. Assembly-line production boosted the quantity of films that Shaw Brothers could produce, but it lowered the quality of the films causing them to eventually lose their appeal to local audiences. In discussing the characteristics of

1980s' Hong Kong films, Stokes and Hoover[7] state that frequent complaints from audiences concerned 'their poor-quality productions with lackluster storylines, cloying dialogues and second-rate performances'[8]. Thirdly, the rampant growth of Golden Harvest (GH) (founded by Raymond Chow and Leonard Ho) in its domination of production, distribution and exhibition of films throughout Asia constituted a challenge to Shaw Brothers' supremacy. In his study of GH's production mode, Michael Curtin[9] notes the innovative strategies that Chow and Ho forged, which involved 'a more moderate tempo of in-house production, more location shooting, and more collaboration with independent filmmakers'[10]. GH's strategies encouraged artistic creativities that elevated the aesthetic level of the films and ultimately attracted the attention of local audiences. Shaw Brothers eventually ceased its operations in film production. As one of the major film production houses, this affected the Hong Kong film industry's output as a whole.

To make the situation worse, two other major film production houses D&B and Cinema City also ceased production in the 1990s.[11] Shujen Wang notes that Hong Kong lost its position of being third in the world regarding the number of films produced per year in the 1990s.[12] Nevertheless, as Yingchi Chu has argued, in the 1990s many independent film production companies, founded by notable local filmmakers, became major forces in local production, for instance Wong Kar-wai's Jet Tone Films, Hark Tsui's Film Workshop and Johnny Mak Productions.[13] These independent companies brought a new aesthetic to the industry. Some of the films that they produced were also commercial hits. However, due to a lack of financial backing compared with the major production house like GH, the quantity of output from these independent film companies was not particularly prolific. Between 1990 and 1997, Film Workshop produced 17 films, while Jet Tone and Johnny Mak Productions only contributed 6.[14] Given the impact of the shut down of the major production houses and the limited amount of films that were produced by independent production companies, Hong Kong's film industry in the 1990s gradually exhibited all the hallmarks of a recession in terms of its annual number of productions (see Appendix: Chart 2).

Although a group of inventive filmmakers proved to be able to produce entertaining Cantonese-language commercial features that mixed various popular genres like kung fu, triads, crime and slapstick comedy to attract local audiences and bring in impressive revenue at the local box office, such as *Aces Go Places* (dir. Eric Tsang, 1982), *My Lucky Stars* (dir. Sammo Hung, 1985), *God of Gamblers* (dir. Wong Jing, 1989)[15], the Hong Kong film market became dominated by Hollywood blockbusters in the 1990s. Owing to the development of privately owned exhibition chains and an agreement established between GH and Hollywood film production and distribution companies in exchange for smoothing the way for GH to distribute their films to American markets, the number of cinemas showing foreign films in Hong Kong increased from 23 in 1983 to 44 in 1994,[16] the percentage of Hong Kong box office takings attributed to foreign films had increased from 27.8% by the end of the 1980s to 46.1% in 1996 (see Appendix: Chart 1).

Among those foreign films that were shown locally, Hollywood productions appeared to capture the majority of the box office takings. According to David Hesmondhalgh, the American film industry increased its international hegemony from the 1990s onwards, with Hong Kong being one of its primary targets.[17] Yingjing Zhang also notes the massive attraction of Hollywood productions in Hong Kong epitomised in 1993 when *Jurassic Park* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993) grossed HK$50million at the local box office.[18] David Bordwell points out that by 1996, five of the top ten films at the local box office were Hollywood blockbusters.[19] In this sense, Hollywood's ascendancy in the local film market should be considered as one of the other major factors resulting in the Hong Kong industry's recession.

The decline of the industry might also have been influenced by the dramatic decrease in attendance at local cinemas in Hong Kong prior to 1997. Local box office attendance dropped from 66 million in 1988 to a mere 22 million in 1996 (see Appendix: Table 2). Several situations may have precipitated this decrease: firstly, the overproduction of poor-quality films. This, as discussed earlier, was the net result of the assembly-line production adopted by Shaw Brothers. As Stokes and Hoover have demonstrated, the typical production time for a film to be made was on average a mere seven to eight weeks from

contract to screen; postproduction was extremely short, some taking only days or even hours before their premieres. Editing often proceeded simultaneously to films being shot. In addition, in order to keep costs down, stunt scenes in action films were filmed with 'rudimentary techniques such as harnesses, wires and sandbags'.[20] Yingchi Chu[21] refers to the general approach of the Hong Kong industry during this period as 'quick, slapdash'[22] , and considers this to be the main reasons of the 'downturn since the early 1990s'.[23] It cannot have helped that audiences were increasingly able to compare the deficiencies of the local system with the more polished product provided by Hollywood.

If overproduction of poor-quality films and the informal practices within the industry gradually led to a loss of interest towards Hong Kong cinema among local audiences, the circulation of pirated VCDs/DVDs of recently released films also played a significant role. Shuje Wang examines piracy in Hong Kong and finds that the practice first "invaded" Hong Kong in 1995 and had already begun to develop into a 'flood'[24] within a year.[25] The impact of piracy remained constant throughout 1997.[26] Pirated copies made it possible for local audiences to watch films at the approximately the same time as the films premiered in theatres, however for a much lower cost than the ticket price.[27] It is no surprise to witness that the Hong Kong film industry countenanced a gloomy prospect at the time.

Financial uncertainty brought about by the impending political transition certainly had a bearing on the health of the Hong Kong film industry. However, to exacerbate the situation, a major financial crisis hit the whole Asia from 1997.[28] The Hong Kong film industry had begun to encroach upon other national film markets through distribution and exhibition from the late 1980s: exhibition chains and cinema complexes that were established to promote Hong Kong cinema, for example, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, and a fairly high percentage of the local markets had been assimilated.[29] Since the financial crisis struck the whole of Asia, falling exchange rates of Southeast Asian currencies generated huge capital losses for production companies that distributed their films to Southeast Asian film markets. In this respect, as Yingjin Zhang has claimed, the Asian financial crisis 'was a deciding factor in the decline of Hong Kong cinema'.[30] To conclude, the Hong Kong film industry had suffered from a gradual contraction since the early 1990s. On that basis

political change might well have played a relatively minor role in increasing the severity of the conditions experienced by the film industry.

A Consideration of the Parameters of the Hong Kong Film Industry since the Political Transition

Although the Hong Kong film industry continued to suffer from a gradual contraction after the handover, its performance since 2000 has been promising. This can be inferred by consideration of the underlying trend in the numbers of annual productions in Hong Kong, which went from 92 films in 1998 and 95 in 1999 to 150 in 2000, 126 in 2001 and 92 in 2002. In conjunction, cinema attendance also showed a slight rise from 20 million in 1999 to 25 million in 2000.[31] This promising improvement in performance also can be observed through the continuing dominance in the local box office rankings of local films (for instance *Made in Hong Kong* [1997], *Love On a Diet* [2001], *Shaolin Soccer* [2001][32], *Golden Chicken* [2002], *Infernal Affairs* trilogy [2002, 2003], *Running On Karma* [2003]). These films not only proved the capability of the industry in revitalising the diversity of conventional genre filmmaking that is rooted in Hong Kong, but also revealed the success of the industry's revival strategies for combatting Hollywood's erosion of its domestic market. Much of this success is owed to filmmakers Fruit Chan, Johnnie To, Andrew Lau and Alan Mak in sustaining Hong Kong cinema's continuing vitality; whilst at the same time credit is also due to a newly arising group of independent filmmakers like Peter Chan, the Pang Brothers and Edmond Peng Ho-cheung, who have dedicated themselves to fully exploring and utilising regional talents, capital and resources to make Pan-Asian films. *Perhaps Love* (2005), *The Eye* (2002) and *Isabella* (2006) have all attracted impressive audiences across several territories; inroads have been made into the global film markets on account of Stephen Chow's computer-generated action and sci-fi dramas embellished with his trademark *mo lei-tau* humor, and what I have elsewhere referred to as 'Wong Kar-wai's visually structured portrayal of melancholy love romances, his obsessive pursuits of lost time and memory that are highlighted by a sense of nostalgia'[33]. Although Hong Kong films have achieved greater popularity in the realm of global markets during the post-1997 era, it is strongly believed that they have also 'retain[ed] a loyal following in Asia, particularly in Thailand and South Korea as well as on the Chinese Mainland'.[34]

New strategies have also been adopted by prominent film production studios in Hong Kong (see also Appendix: Table 3 Statistics of Numbers of Screens, Firms and Employment of Hong Kong's Feature Film Industry 1998-2002) in order to adapt to the transforming market conditions, to reclaim the declining overseas market, whilst in the meantime attempting to compensate for, or at least to bypass, the setbacks that have resulted either from internal factors such as substandard performance within the industry, for example poor quality of filmmaking and overproductions, or from external factors such as rampant video/DVD piracy. In his discussion of Golden Harvest (GH), Michael Curtin concludes that it has been transferred from concentrating on film productions to concentrating on rebuilding and expanding its distribution and exhibition.[35] He argues that such a strategy was adopted due to the deep belief in the studio having already reached its full maturity within production.[36] Curtin further points out that with the "mission" of expanding its theatre chains in Southeast Asia, for instance acquiring cinema chains in Taiwan and constructing multiplex theaters in Mainland China, GH is expected to become the biggest exhibitor in East Asia.[37] Focusing only on distribution and exhibition has allowed GH to reserve its energy to carefully choose to fund film producers and distribute films that have the potential to generate huge profits; it has also secured the studio's authority to determine the effective distribution operations of films without risking any unnecessary capital.

Sustained by this strategy, GH has rapidly become a distribution leader in Hong Kong and Singapore with its successful theatrical releases of considerable numbers of films into these regions, which were then instantly followed by VCD/DVD circulations and cable TV premiers;[38] in territories such as Taiwan and Mainland China, GH has been able to play a key role by collaborating with the local independent distribution companies.[39] For example, in Taiwan GH co-operated with major local film distributor CMC Entertainment and also gradually became one of the shareholders of Vieshow Cinemas, the largest theatre chain in Taiwan.[40] These schemes were able to help GH regain the depressed Taiwan film market that had resulted from the Asian Financial crisis. Since the 1997 handover, GH has distributed at least 45 films, many of which were box office hits: *Twins Effect* (dir. Dante Lam and Donnie Yen, 2003), *New Police Story* (dir. Benny Chan, 2004), *Infernal Affairs*

III (2003), *Initial D* (dir. Lau Wei-keung and Alan Mak, 2005), *Rob-B-Hood* (dir. Benny Chan, 2006) and *Protégé* (dir. Tung-shing Yee, 2007).[41] GH has also gone some way to support film productions from the local as well as from across borders: this is evidenced in GH financed big-budget films such as Peter Chan and John Woo's martial arts epics *The Warlords* (2007) and *Red Cliff* (2008).[42] GH also invested in independent productions from Mainland China like *In the Name of Shooting Star* (dir. Zheng Wei, 2007) and *I am Liu Yuejin* (dir. Liwen Ma, 2008),[43] which not only generated impressive box office revenues for GH, but also helped to promote the studio's renowned reputation in Mainland China. In 2009 GH announced a new initiative, which was to 'expand the distribution arm boldly into Mainland China'.[44]

By comparison, smaller production companies such as China Star have adopted different strategies. David Bordwell contends that due to the loss of regional theatrical markets, China Star focuses solely on producing films that would appeal to local taste,[45] and, as claimed by Curtin,[46] concentrating on only distributing videos to the PRC. Being aware of the local audience's high expectations, China Star established the key target of producing high quality films that will attract the audience. In order to do so, the company only produces films that feature established directors, well-written scripts and popular film stars.[47] This determination appears rewarded when witnessing high quality films like *Election* (dir. Jonnie To, 2005), *Election II* (dir. Johnnie To, 2006) and *Mad Detective* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, 2007) that not only regained local audience's interest, but also received numerous nominations and awards at the Hong Kong Film Festival.

Among the recently established film production companies in Hong Kong (companies that were established in the 1990s), Media Asia's performance has attracted much scholarly attention concerning the company's development and its operating strategies. The company's Hollywoodised production style (which consists of, for instance, garnering funding from banks and conglomerates, drawing up detailed budget plans, carefully choosing high quality scripts and paying extra attention to a project's promotion and marketing campaigns) has been discussed by Michael Curtin, David Bordwell and Yingchi Chu.[48] Following an established templates for production, many high-profile and also high-

quality films have been produced since the company's foundation. Many of these films are action crime genre films, such as *2000 AD* (2000), the *Infernal Affair*s trilogy (2002, 2003), *Initial D* (2005), *The Banquet* (2006), *Confession of Pain* (2006), *Triangle* (2007) and *The Warlords* (2007). They embodied Media Asia's global multimedia image,[49] largely on account of being deeply rooted in local culture and film convention whilst concurrently synthesising international styles and norms. The global phenomenon that the *Infernal Affair*s trilogy (2002, 2003) created amplified the return of Hong Kong cinema's ownership among East Asian regions and Media Asia's 'worldwide prominence'[50] was subsequently established (the detailed analysis of the production, distribution and exhibition of the *Infernal Affair*s trilogy (2002, 2003) will be carried out later in this chapter).

Since 2004, the year CEPA was implemented (for a detailed discussion of CEPA see Introduction), Media Asia started to invest in big budget feature films in Mainland China. Celebrated Mainland commercial filmmaker Feng Xiaogang's 2004 action comedy thriller *A World without Thieves* was Media Asia's first investment project. The film's respectable box office receipts (RMB$103 million[51]) proved the company's attempt to enter the complex Mainland China market to be a success. *The Founding of a Republic* (dir. Huang Jianxin and Han Sanping, 2009) was another recent major box office success funded by Media Asia. The real significance of this film lies in its political propaganda value in that the film was part of the programme of annual releases timed to coincide with the anniversary of the founding of the PRC and the time of the year (during July and August) when nationalism is traditionally promoted by the government. Media Asia's involvement in such a pillar of the propaganda establishment is clear indication of its intention to not only exploit the mainstream of Chinese cinema but also to contribute towards one of the corner stones of its nationalist spirit.

The above discussion points to a significant development that has taken place in the Hong Kong film industry since 1997, namely the growing collaboration with Mainland China and successful Mainland market penetration. These tendencies have undoubtedly "benefited" from both political events (the 1997 handover) and economic contexts (the Asian economic crisis). I would argue, however, that these factors ultimately comprise positive outcomes of

the combined actions of individual film personnel and production companies and their devotion to reconstructing the infrastructure of the Hong Kong film industry. That having been said, concern has been raised by some scholars in discussing the impact on post-1997 Hong Kong cinema resulting from the growing collaboration and market penetration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. For example, in his article 'One Country Two Cultures? Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema and Co-Productions', Chu Yiu-wai has examined the status of the co-productions between the two territories since the handover. In his article Chu argues that such development not only compromised the previously instantly recognisable identity represented by Hong Kong cinema, it also established an obstacle for the development of middle to small-budget productions due to the fact that collaboration only seemed to encourage 'high concept' blockbusters.[52] Chu's arguments have valid points, however, it should not be overlooked that Hong Kong's identity has always been difficult to define given Hong Kong's complex historical background and political status (a point that is discussed in detail by Ruby Cheung Wai-yee in her thesis [see Introduction]) and its previous involvement in regional and global economic collaborations. It also may well be, that due to Mainland market conditions, collaborations with the Mainland have only proved feasible for big-budget films, however, we also might need to consider the possibility that this apparently "unhealthy" growth of the Hong Kong film industry could also have been influenced by a determination on the part of the filmmakers to compete with the domination of Hollywood blockbusters, as discussed in the later sections of this chapter. It is also notable that Chu has chosen not to address transnational cinematic collaborations in Hong Kong that did not involve Mainland China, as a great many of the collaborations post-1997 are in fact with other Asian regions. A number of these pan-Asian collaborations certainly do not fall into the category of big-budget productions and many of them exude a form of "Asianisation" that has little to do with the Mainland, tending to suggest that the changes referred to by Chu have less to do with the handover and more to do with the increasingly global nature of filmmaking. This point is returned to in a later section.

Film policies launched since 1997

Positive efforts also have been made by the governments of both Hong Kong and Mainland China (though mainly Hong Kong), to revitalise the Hong Kong film industry in the post-1997 period. In the following section film policies that have been launched during the post-1997 era are systematically addressed. Apart from the aforementioned CEPA, in 1999 the Hong Kong government set up the Film Development Fund (FDF) to financially support projects that are 'conducive to the long-term development of the film industry in Hong Kong'.[53] The FDF aims to fund small-to-medium budget productions as one of the fund's criteria requires that the budget of the productions do not exceed more than HK$15 million. This policy also requires that the productions 'must be in the full film script to produce a feature drama film intended for commercial theatrical exhibition in Hong Kong'[54]. This requirement not only expects a high quality of the productions, it also encourages the productions to aim for a reasonable commercial return. Another interesting criterion the FDF requires is that the main film crew or the cast of the productions must employ at least one permanent resident of Hong Kong.[55] In this respect the government (HKSAR)'s intention to maintain a unique Hong Kong identity is clear. Nevertheless, the obstacle laying within this policy which would have proved to be a major challenge for filmmakers or film production companies is that they must show they have already 'secured third-party financing to the satisfaction of the Government'.[56] In 2007, the FDF was given HK$300 million by HKSAR, the intention being to expand the scope of financial support for small-to-medium budget film productions and as a result, several small-to-medium budget films did in fact receive financial backing from the FDF.[57] Films like the animation feature *McDull Wu Dang* (dir. Brian Tse, 2008), romantic dramas *Claustrophobia* (dir. Ivy Ho, 2008) and *Lovers' Discourse* (dir. Derek Tsang Kwok-chung, 2010) and the melodrama *Echoes of Rainbow* (dir. Alex Law Kai-yui, 2010) all maintain a unique Hong Kong style, and these films not only generated reasonable box office revenues for the industry, but also received mostly positive critical reviews.

According to Laikwan Pang the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), has been particularly influential in promoting filmmaking in the territory, especially in

facilitating the launch of two important initiatives, the Hong Kong International Film and TV Market (FILMART) in 1997 and the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Form (HAF) in 2000.[58] FILMART is an annual trade fair organised by HKTDC with the intention of promoting Hong Kong as a regional hub for the 'distribution and production of film, TV programmes, and entertainment-related products in the Asia-Pacific and to promote cross-media, cross-business partnerships'.[59] Celebrating its 15th edition in March, FILMART2011 attracted 596 exhibitors from 30 countries and regions, increasing by 8.8% compared to the previous fair with nearly 5100 visitors from 54 countries and regions.[60] Ever since its inauguration in 1997, FILMART has developed from mainly film-related events into a 'cross-media, cross-industry entertainment platform in the region'.[61] The categories of the major exhibitors at the 2011's event covered various media channels and entertainment forms, for instance digital entertainment and games, digital effects and music, satellite broadcasting companies, radio broadcasting, internet broadcasting, festival/fair organisers, and entertainment-related professional services.[62] The event has also continued to attract renowned producers, distributors, investors and professionals from around the world such as Mainland China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, as well as Western countries such as UK, Australia, France, America, with the opportunity to 'launch full scale promotion, network with key industry players and negotiate deals'.[63]

FILMART serves as a platform for personnel from various sectors of the media industry to make contacts and promote themselves, with the concurrent HAF event specifically targeting the filmmaking circle. HAF acts as a film financing platform that is designed to 'connect Asian filmmakers with upcoming film projects with internationally prominent film financiers, producers, bankers, distributors, buyers and funders for co-production ventures'[64]. This three-day event celebrated its 10th edition in March 2012 when it attracted more than 1000 filmmakers and financiers from more than 39 countries and regions. The participating individuals and companies were from East and Southeast Asia regions such as Hong Kong, Mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, together with European countries like UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark, and USA and Canada.[65] Apart from providing networking venues for participated filmmakers, financiers and exhibitors, HAF also creates screening and media publicity events for around 30 film

projects that are selected every year by the HAF Advisory members from among the submissions from countries and regions around the world. Resulting from the fact that the HAF Advisory is formed by creditable industry professionals, the selected film projects have often gone on to achieve successful box office performances as well as critical acclaim after completion.[66] HAF also offers cash rewards to selected filmmakers every year 'in recognition of the outstanding potential of their projects'.[67] Many established Hong Kong filmmakers such as Stanley Kwan, Ann Hui, Gordon Chan Kar-seung and Peter Chan have all benefited from the establishment of HAF,[68] as have a talented new generation of filmmakers typified by Edmond Pang Ho Cheung, whose internationally acclaimed feature film *Isabella* (2006) received generous financial support from HAF. A brief analysis concentrating on Edmond Pang and *Isabella* (2006) will be included in the latter part of this chapter. In conclusion, HAF serves as a match-making platform for the Hong Kong film industry, helping commercially viable and promising film projects in Hong Kong and Asia, locating financial and business support through co-productions or joint ventures.[69] Throughout the years, HAF has become one of the leading film-financing hubs in Asia.[70]

Additional new film policy, in the shape of 'Hong Kong Film: New Action', was introduced by HKSAR in 2008 to further develop the markets for Hong Kong films in Mainland China and Southeast Asia (specifically targeting Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan).[71] This policy needs to be discussed by firstly explaining the reformation instigated by HKSAR in 2006. In 2006 HKSAR announced that film-related policy, planning and activities, including filming support and film promotions in Mainland China and overseas, were to be coordinated by the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. As a result, the Hong Kong Film Development Council (HKFDC) was established in April 2007. Its role being to advise the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau 'on the policy, strategy and institutional arrangement for the promotion and development of the Hong Kong film industry, as well as the use of public funds to support the industry'.[72] 'Hong Kong Film: New Action' was one of the more noteworthy projects launched by HKFDC to help revitalise Hong Kong films in the markets outside Hong Kong.

The mission of 'Hong Kong Film: New Action' shares a certain similarity with that of HAF, which is to provide a platform for filmmakers to commence a direct dialogue with the potential buyers and distributors from Southeast Asian regions, 'paving the way for future co-operations and establishing solid market networks'.[73] Other objectives of 'Hong Kong Film: New Action' include giving Hong Kong filmmakers a chance to present their innovative ideas specifically targeting the market operators from Mainland China, thereby reviving their interest and understanding of Hong Kong films. [74] Ever since this project's launch more than 30 Hong Kong filmmakers including Gordon Chan Ka-seung, Kenneth Bi, Samson Chiu Leung-chun, Edmond Pang Ho-cheung and Yau Nai-hoi, signed up and went to Mainland China, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia to introduce their works, production plans and filmmaking concepts to the investors, producers and distributors.[75] From March 2009 onwards, this project has been held concurrently with FILMART, where exhibition venues are set up specifically to promote the newer generations of Hong Kong filmmakers.

In order to further understand the development of Hong Kong cinema in the post-1997 era, I intend to examine in detail in the following sections of this chapter, the filmmaking activities of some of the industry's most important figures (for instance, Johnnie To, the Pang Brothers, Peter Chan), and the films (such as *Running out of Time* [1999], *Golden Chicken* [2002], *Infernal Affairs* trilogy [2002, 2003] and *Perhaps Love* [2005]) that had significant impact upon the industry. My intention here is to base these examinations on the second, third, fourth and fifth hypotheses that I proposed in the introductory chapter, in debating how these filmmakers experimented with different means of filmmaking, including how some of the filmmakers fully embraced the advantages that the aforementioned film policies have provided, whilst others have adopted the Hollywood filmmaking system, copying its production strategies and the film formulae, in order to regain the local market. I also discuss how the films that they made have embraced local culture, talent and genres in subsequently creating a new form of localised Hong Kong cinema[76] in response to the challenges of an age of transition and globalisation.

Postcolonial Localism: Representing the Reconstruction of Hong Kong Cinema

Suffering from the effects of the on-going Asian financial crisis, the Hong Kong film industry experienced its nadir in 1998: only managing to produce 89 feature films compared to over 200 in 1992 and 1993 (see Appendix: Chart 2). This figure, as pointed out by Yingjin Zhang, represented a mere 39 per cent of the total box office revenue that year.[77] The crisis led to an acute shortage in availability of financial investment in Hong Kong and the statistics show that investment dropped from US$151 million before the crisis to only US$61 million (see Appendix: Table 1). The crisis also had a huge influence on the profit generated by the overseas markets that the industry had depended on. According to Yingchi Chu, this share of the profit had dropped from approximately 70 per cent to less than 30 per cent in the late 1990s.[78] Stokes and Hoover quote the comments of Hong Kong filmmaker Mable Cheung Yuen-ting regarding the situation confronting the industry:

> The audience is very careful about the choice of which film to see. That's why they flock to see big Hollywood films which guarantee good value for money. Furthermore, some of our most popular stars have crossed over to Hollywood…since there is no major trend now, it is easier for filmmakers like myself to find financing for non-mainstream types of films. Since everybody is at a loss as to what types of films can make money, film bosses are willing to bet on filmmakers who can provide a full script and a reasonable cast.[79]

One possible strategy to overcome the crisis is demonstrated by Cheung's own successful nostalgic drama, *City of Glass* (1998). The film portrays a lifelong romance between two lovers who meet at Hong Kong University as undergraduates. The romance goes through the stages of falling in love, being apart and eventually marrying other partners, reuniting and falling in love again, and ultimately dying in a tragic car accident in London on New Year's Eve 1997. Cheung intermingles this bittersweet romance with the historical evolvement of the triangular relationship that Hong Kong has with its British coloniser and motherland China.

In terms of narrative, *City of Glass* offers a romantic and nostalgic approach to addressing Hong Kong's colonial situation in both pre- and post-1997 cultural values and different generations' attitudes towards identity search. However, the film's critical acclaim (Best Screenplay and Best Cinematography at the 1998 Golden Horse Film Festival[80]) and box office success (HK$9, 895,565[81]) provides a different perspective on engaging with Hong Kong's past and predicting Hong Kong's future for post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. Golden Harvest (GH) produced and distributed *City of Glass* and it was unusual for a major production house to promote a non-mainstream genre film amid the unpromising economic atmosphere and the constant pressure brought by Hollywood blockbusters. Other films produced and released by GH the same year were predominantly mainstream genre films,[82] including box office favourite Jackie Chan's action comedy *Who am I?* (dir. Benny Chan Muk-shing and Jackie Chan), *Young and Dangerous*: *The Prequel* (dir. Andrew Lau Wai-keung) and the creative fantasy *wu xia* genre *The Stormriders* (dir. Andrew Lau Wai-keung).[83]

The main reasons that *City of Glass* received the support of a major production house are firstly, that the film's plot contains elements of the pursuit of identity that Hong Kong audiences could relate to and also that the story fits in with Hong Kong's social reality. Secondly, the casting (including Hong Kong A-list stars Leon Lai and Shu Qi) was strong enough for the production company to feel confident in funding it. Thirdly, the Hong Kong film industry had begun to realise that to produce films which contained a unique "localness" was one of the strategies to compete with Hollywood imports in the local film markets. The significance of *City of Glass* lies not only in the fact that the film sentimentally reconstructs 1970s' Hong Kong for the younger generation to "remember" and, as Yingjin Zhang aptly puts it, endorses a positive attitude towards the future of Hong Kong, but it also paved the way for other non-mainstream Hong Kong filmmakers to devote themselves to making aesthetically innovative Hong Kong films.[84] Fruit Chan is certainly representative of this group of filmmakers, with his idiosyncratic style and production strategies that attracted attention both locally and internationally (see Chapter Four).

Despite the continuing financial crisis, the Hong Kong film industry showed signs of recovery from 1999 onwards. The annual number of released feature films had risen slightly from 84 in 1997 to 100 in 1999, 133 in 2000 and 133 again in 2001 (see Appendix: Chart 2). In addition, local films started to regain the interest of local audiences: 1999's top ten box office revenues indicated that they were mostly dominated by local films apart from only one foreign film that had managed to rank among the top ten,[85] namely *GTO* (dir. Masayuki Suzuki), a Japanese feature based on a popular TV series that deals with the relationship between rebellious pupils and school teachers in a contemporary context. This is in stark comparison with 1996 when, according to Yingjin Zhang's study, five of the top ten films were Hollywood imports.[86] These signs of recovery could have been benefited by the fact that the film markets in Hong Kong have been encouraged by the following factors. Firstly, as I discussed earlier, the government of HKSAR has been actively supporting and promoting the film industry since 1998, which includes setting up the Film Services Office (FSO) to facilitate film production and the Film Guarantee Fund to provide financial aid to film production companies who are registered in Hong Kong, with the aim of maintaining Hong Kong's reputation as Asia's major film production centre.[87]

Regarding the excessive piracy that restrained healthy growth of the Hong Kong film industry and markets, the handover, as argued by Shujen Wang, has had a significant impact.[88] The introduction of a Copyright Ordinance, based on a 1956 British Law, brought Hong Kong closer to compliance with various world treaties on copyright protection.[89] This was followed by other post-handover HKSAR reforms to enforce disclosure and licensing of the import and export of optical media.[90] Although these measures could not completely eradicate the problem, they did help in curbing some of its excesses.

No new regulations regarding censorship (apart from exempting non-commercial still films including slides of a cultural, educational, instructional, promotional or religious nature from the classification requirement) have been introduced to the Hong Kong film industry after the Film Censorship Ordinance was amended in 1999, at least not internally.[91] The situation is occasionally different where Hong Kong's new attempts at entering Mainland film markets have encountered the PRC's rigorous censorship. As the State Administration

of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) put it, in order to 'purify screen entertainment and create a more harmonious and "green" film environment for the public, especially children'[92], the criteria for film censorship were reiterated by SARFT in March 2008. Under the reiterated version of the regulations, films will be banned in Mainland China if they violate the basic principles of the Constitution, or if they threaten the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, or if they divulge state secrets and harm the reputation and interests of the state, or if they instigate national hatred and discrimination, undermine the harmony among ethnic groups, or harm ethnic customs and practices. Films that violate state policies on religion, propagate cult religion or superstition, disrupt social order or social stability, propagate obscenity, gambling, violence, or abet criminal activities, insult or defame others, or infringe upon others' legitimate rights and interests will also be banned. The regulations also ban films that corrupt social morality or defame superiority of national culture.[93]

The regulations further request films to be cut or altered if they contain the following: distorting Chinese civilisation and history or distorting the history of other countries; or disrespecting other civilisations and customs; disparaging the image of revolutionary leaders, heroes and important historical figures; tampering with Chinese or foreign classics and distorting the image of the important figures portrayed therein; disparaging the image of the People's Liberation Army, armed police, public security organ or judiciary; showing obscene and vulgar content, exposing scenes of promiscuity, rape, prostitution, sexual acts, perversion, homosexuality, masturbation and private body parts including the male or female genitalia. Films also need to be altered and cut if they contain dirty and vulgar dialogues, songs, background music and sound effects, or show contents of murder, violence, terror, ghosts and the supernatural; contents include distorting value judgment between truth and lies, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, righteous and unrighteous also need to be altered; the regulations go on to request film to be altered if they show deliberate expressions of remorselessness in committing crimes; if they show specific details of criminal behaviour; if they expose special investigation methods; showing content which evokes excitement from murder, bloodiness, violence, drug abuse and gambling, and scenes of mistreating prisoners, torturing criminals or suspects also need to be altered. Films that

contain excessive horror scenes, dialogues, background music and sound effects, propagate a passive or negative outlook on life, world view and value system, deliberately exaggerate the ignorance of ethnic groups or the dark side of society, advertise religious extremism, stir up ambivalence and conflicts between different religions as a result causing disharmony in the community, advocate harm to the ecological environment, animal cruelty, show contents that contain the killing or consuming of nationally protected animals, show excessive drinking, smoking and other bad habits, will need to be cut or altered.[94] In this regard, one can imagine that films containing improper contents, for instance pornography, separatism of Tibetan, Muslim and Uighur nationalists, direct attacks on China, or they contain the contents that promote the split between Taiwan and Mainland China'[95], will indeed be banned or needed to be cut or altered. The most notable example of when Hong Kong films faced the dilemma of strict censorship regulations when they attempted to enter the Mainland film market is the distribution of *Infernal Affairs* Trilogy (2002, 2003), which will be returned to later in this chapter (also see chapters Two, Three and Four, the analyses of Stephen Chow, Wong Kar-wai and Fruit Chan's filmmaking methods).

1999's top ten productions consisted predominantly of mainstream films, mainly action/kung fu films, comedy and drama. These exhibited how the Hong Kong film industry on the one hand copied the formulae of films from Hollywood to produce "Hollywoodised" Hong Kong films, while on the other hand it embraced local talent, culture and genres to create a new form of localised Hong Kong cinema: Stephen Chow's *mo lei-tau* comedy *King of Comedy* (dir. Stephen Chow and Lee Lik-chi) (see Chapter Two), pop idol Andy Lau's crime action thriller *Running out of Time* (dir. Johnnie To), slapstick comedies that continued to engage with the Hong Kong cultural tradition of gambling *The Tricky Master* and *The Conmen in Vegas*, directed by commercial films director Wong Jing widely acclaimed for the 'recycled small-budget quickie'[96], and the wu xia genre *A Man Called Hero* (dir. Andrew Lau Wai-keung) that followed a similar cinematic pattern created by *The Stormriders* (1998). In addition there was *The Legend of Speed* (dir. Andrew Lau Wai-keung) that resonated with later Hollywood street racing film series *Fast and Furious*, and the melancholy romance *Tempting Heart* (dir. Sylvia Cheung) featuring Takeshi Kaneshiro, Gigi Leung and Karen Mok designed to appeal to the younger

generations. Among these top ten films, some were produced by major production houses, like GH's *A Man Called Hero*, but the rest were mainly made by independent film production companies formed by filmmakers, like *King of Comedy* by Stephen Chow's Star Overseas (see Chapter Three), *Running out of Time* from Milkyway Image established by Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, *The Tricky Master* and *The Conmen in Vegas* from BoB and Partners set up by Wong Jing, Manfred Wong and Andrew Lau Wai-keung.

Independent companies were established just prior to the handover and had already become major forces in local production by the end of the 1990s.[97] Their success was arguably due to their founders' extensive experience in the industry and marketing strategies that fully engaged with mainstream genres yet at the same time were dedicated to the careful preparation of original scripts that would represent Hong Kong's unique localness, and then crucially casting those scripts with A-list stars. In this respect, the prosperous development of Milkyway Image from its initial establishment by Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai and the prolific and creative productions that have been produced by the company are particularly notable in the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema.

Johnnie To and his Milkyway Image

There has been a considerable amount of scholarly interest recently in the work of Johnnie To. Offering a different approach compared to most of the studies of Hong Kong cinema, which is to look at how the director follows conventional rules of genre filmmaking, Stephen Teo's *Director in Action: Johnnie To and the Hong Kong Action Film* closely examines how To and his action films have shaped the filmmaking practice of the Hong Kong film industry and conventions of action genre of Hong Kong cinema, and also assesses how the distinctive styles represented by To's action genre films have been influenced by the local and Western film culture.[98] Teo's study of Johnnie To is situated within the wider context that ranges from culture and history to politics. Teo refers to To's 'uneven' auteurist style.[99] However, despite or perhaps because of this "unevenness", his style has brought about the admiration of local aficionados and later international critical acclaim for To.

Michael Ingham's *Johnnie To Kei-fung's PTU* attempts to define the identity represented by Johnnie To and his films given the complex issues that are always debatable when studying Hong Kong cinema within the context of nationhood, transnationalism and globalisation.[100] In addition, through a closer examination of the narrative development and filmic language employed in the 2003 feature *PTU*, Ingham argues that to place most of Johnnie To's films in the category of action genre is too simplistic. To's personal signature style and the technical and thematic qualities of his films deserve a further consideration and appreciation.[101]

Meanwhile, Laikwan Pang's article 'Masculinity in Crisis: Films of Milkyway Image and Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema'[102] focuses on examining the male representation in the works produced by Johnnie To's company Milkyway Image, more specifically films made during the company's first production period. Drawing on a commercial restructuring that has developed in Hong Kong since 1997, as well as an analysis of the unique masculine tradition of Hong Kong cinema, Pang argues that the Milkyway Image films indicate a clearly contradictory representation of masculinity in Hong Kong cinema, and an inevitable situation given the crises confronted in Hong Kong society post-1997.[103]

In his filmmaking career To has relied on the local-based market from its outset. Milkyway Image, founded by the director and his long-term collaborator Wai Ka-fai in 1996, has been engaged with predominantly local film productions since its inception. Like Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, To was schooled in Hong Kong's dominant TVB network, the well known training ground for many major directors of the Hong Kong new wave. Immediately after graduation, To started out as a directorial assistant. By the time he left TVB and started to work for Hong Kong's 'most avowedly commercial production company'[104] Cinema City, he had already made his name, allying with other Hong Kong new wave directors like Hark Tsui and Stanley Kwan, with his imaginative directorial debut martial arts genre *The Enigmatic Case* (1980). Wai Ka-fai was working as a scriptwriter at TVB at the time of To's joining. By the time To left TVB, Wai was still developing his career, writing TV dramas and eventually two TV series: *Looking Back in Anger* (1989) and *The Greed of Man* (1992) that were produced by Wai to much critical acclaim, according to

Davis and Yeh.[105] In the early years that To was working for Cinema City as a director and producer, he honed his directing skills through popular genres like slapstick comedy and action due to the company's highly commercial orientation. Although these films were box office hits, for instance the juvenile ghost comedy *Happy Ghosts* 3 (1986) and the lowbrow entertainment *Eighth Happiness* (1988), they lacked any distinctive aesthetic signature. By the early 1990s, the critical success of *All about Ah Long* (1989) and *A Moment of Romance* (1990), films centred on the portrayal of male heroism and masculinity, had proved To's capability for handling the artistic side of filmmaking. The romantic sentiment and effective melodrama captured by these two films led film scholars to often credit them along with John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* as the best-known classics of the 1980s.[106] Apart from becoming a skillful commercial film director, To also learned from Cinema City effective and calculating marketing strategies, and moreover, forged broad connections with major distribution companies, which all paved the way for the future success of Milkyway Image.

Wai Ka-fai also contributed to establishing the position of Milkyway Image in the canon between art and commercial cinema in the Hong Kong film industry. Having been critically acclaimed as being 'in counter distinction to Johnnie To's commercial brawn'[107] due to his 'more distinct art-house "edge"'[108], Wai had already directed *Too Many Ways to Be Number One* (1997), a gangster film with complex multiple narratives, almost immediately after Milkyway Image was first established. The film's creative script and imaginative visual experimentation helped it to achieve the award "Film of Merit" at the 1998 Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards. Apart from harvesting more than 3 million HK dollars in domestic box office revenue, the film also gained much critical attention, with one contemporary review of *Too Many Ways to Be Number One* hailing the film as 'Milkyway's one authentic attempt at avant-gardism.'[109]

Combining To's effective marketing strategy and his and Wai Ka-fai's directing skills, Milkyway Image continued to create box office successes. *Love on a Diet* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, 2000) accomplished more than HK$40 million at the local box office, while *Fulltime Killer* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, 2001) brought in more than HK$25

million, *My Left Eye Sees Ghosts* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, 2002) more than $20 million and *Running on Karma* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai, 2003) more than $26 million. Genres produced by Milkyway have included romantic comedy, action thriller and supernatural horror and slightly edgier art house material. Embodying a new localism of postcolonial Hong Kong cinema, Milkyway's success could be argued as being based on the company's principal strategy of flexibly delivering films within various popular genres that embrace megastar vehicles to promote the films, and adopt unique local cultural forms in a successful attempt at resisting the global hegemony.

Unlike other auteurs such as John Woo, Jackie Chan and Stephen Chow, who have long been associated with the action/kung fu genre of Hong Kong cinema and have successfully transferred their filmmaking platform from domestic to Hollywood, To and his Milkyway Image retained their production focus within the local film industry. This is indicated by the fact that most of Milkyway Image's feature films were locally financed; their plots were constructed within local cultural form and popular genre; they were also mainly commercially packaged and enhanced by employing local major stars, and their distribution processes were 'allied with local major distribution companies such as China Star and Media Asia' [110]. However, as my discussion of some of To's films will show, despite his apparent rootedness in the local industry, there is also distinctive translocal dimension to his production strategies that has been in evidence for some time.

***Running out of Time* (1999)**

Achieving a top ten performance at the local box office and spawning a sequel two years later, *Running out of Time* provides an innovative cinematic form that successfully combines the inherited old Hong Kong action genre formulas with Johnnie To's idiosyncratic treatment. The film portrays dying jewel thief Cheung (Andy Lau), suffering from an untreatable illness, and his plans to avenge his father's death in a way that involves stealing diamonds. The revenge progresses into a witty cat-and-mouse chase centring on Cheung and police negotiator Ho (Lau Ching-wan).

The tradition of action genre in Hong Kong cinema normally centres on spectacular choreography and heroic masculinity but it also contains somewhat weaker story plots and undiversified characters. Rather than simply focusing on filling *Running out of Time* with scenes of gun fighting, car chases, kung fu fighting and heroic bloodshed in the tradition of the action genre, Johnnie To developed the film into an effective drama with melancholy emotional entanglements between the main characters and an emphasis of these main characters' personalities. The screenplay was a collaboration between prolific Hong Kong screen-writer Yau Nai-hoi and French authors Julien Carbon and Laurent Corniaud, attesting to the film's translocal personnel. The shooting locations included some Hong Kong business towers, local mini-buses, *Cha Chan Teng* [111] and the streets.

Location shooting kept costs down, but also managed to capture the realistic urban space of post-colonial Hong Kong, which Hong Kong audiences could relate to. Most importantly, the film embraced the advantage of fully utilising local cultural references that Hollywood blockbusters are unable to adopt. This involved subverting audience expectations. For example, the film's casting subverted Andy Lau's heart-throb image into that of an ageing relative and even subjugates Lau to the role of a drag queen. In an interview conducted by the film critic Sean Axmaker, To admitted that one of the rationales for making *Running out of Time* was to 'challenge the usually flamboyant and exuberant Lau' [112]. To's successful transformation of Andy Lau not only rewarded Lau with Best Actor at the 2000 Hong Kong Film Awards but could also be said to have contributed to the decline in Lau's pop idol career. According to Dave Sanjek's review of the film, it took two years to complete. [113] This contrasts markedly with the pre-1997 industry's practice of shoddy preparation and low quality production. Compared to To's feature release *The Mission* (1999), which was shot in 18 days without a completed script and on a low budget,[114] resulting in it only grossing HK$4.6 million box office receipts,[115] the production methods adopted by To in *Running out of Time* indicated the way in which the post-1997 industry would develop. The film was allied to well established local distribution company China Star, and was distributed with sufficient financial support and mature marketing campaigns.

After the success of *Running out of Time*, Milkyway Image continued producing various different subgenres of popular cinema, including the romantic comedy genre that has proved to be the most successfully received by the local audience, for instance: *Needing You* (dir. Johnnie To and Wa Ka-fai, 2000), *Love on a Diet* (dir. Johnnie To and Wa Ka-fai, 2001) and *Love For All Seasons* (dir. Johnnie To and Wa Ka-fai, 2003).[116] To's ability in mastering Hong Kong commercial film production characterises a post-colonial localism of Hong Kong cinema. By 2007, in the context that at least three of his directorial features were released outside Hong Kong: *Election* (2005), *Exiled* (2006) and *Mad Detective* (2007), Johnnie To can be said to have achieved international recognition. Daniel Martin has claimed that these films have satisfied a demand from Western audiences and distributors for Hong Kong action cinema in the absence of other recognisable directors producing action films in the post-colonial period.[117]

Infernal Affairs: the end of pure imitation of Hollywood

In the realm of action genre filmmaking, the post-1997 Hong Kong film industry saw a further promising sign with the remarkable success of Media Asia[118] productions' *Infernal Affairs* trilogy (2002, 2003). The significance of the trilogy lies not only in the industrial success the films achieved but also in the critical attention that the trilogy has attracted. Moreover, the success of the trilogy led to Hollywood's interest in remaking it as a Western version of *Infernal Affairs*, *The Departed* (dir. Martin Scorsese, 2006).

The focus of most critical discussions centres on the trilogy's ideological applications of religion and post-modernity, moral ambiguity and identity confusion. Additionally, the trilogy's addressing of social issues such as government legitimacy and individual alienation has drawn much attention. In this context, one of the most comprehensive analyses of the three films has been offered by Gina Marchetti in her monograph *Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's* Infernal Affairs-*The Trilogy*.[119] Vivian P.Y. Lee discusses the trilogy's cinematic use of nostalgia and memory, history and present, as well as the schizophrenic symptoms manifest in the protagonist.[120] The general consensus is that the trilogy's "high concept" transcends usual action genre precedents. However, my main interest in the

trilogy concerns its industrial significance: its box office accomplishment, its aesthetic indebtedness to a wide array of Hollywood classics, its intra-Chinese filmmaking practice and its seamless synthesis of 'local genre elements with international styles and norms'[121].

The trilogy grossed remarkable box office receipts locally and regionally, given that at the time Hong Kong was threatened by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pandemic and Asia was still suffering a financial crisis. The trilogy's first installment was released locally in late 2002 and immediately topped the local box office ratings at HK$55 million; ahead of Hollywood import *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, which, in comparison, only grossed HK$29.2 million. According to Davis and Yeh's discussions of the trilogy,[122] the first installment also doubled the regional box office receipts grossed by Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002); while in South Korea the first installment grossed a most impressive $849,877,[123] and was sold to several western countries including the UK and the US.[124] The trilogy rapidly spawned two sequels within a few months of its initial release.

For the second installment (a prequel to the first film), Media Asia entered into a co-production with Singapore's MediaCorp-Raintree with the film earning a pleasingly rewarding HK$25 million, as noted by Davis and Yeh.[125] As previously mentioned, the distribution of the trilogy's first and second installments showed that Hong Kong cinema did indeed encounter problems when attempting to break into the Mainland film markets. According to Davis and Yeh's study, the first of the trilogy was banned in the Mainland.[126] Presumably it was due to the fact that the film propagates violence and abets criminal activities, and also perhaps corrupts social morality. For the second installment, according to Davis and Yeh's study, although it was released in the Mainland, it received a muted marketing promotion; for the third episode of the trilogy, the producers deliberately tailored the film's theme to fit in with an acceptable standard of morality for Mainland authorities.[127]

The box office receipts for the second installment were fairly modest compared to the third, which grossed RMB 36 million and climbed to be the third-highest grossing film of the year in Mainland China.[128] For the making of *Infernal Affairs III*, Media Asia formed a

partnership with Mainland film production studios China Film Group and Tianjin Film Studio. Perhaps by this time Media Asia and the film's producers were both aware of the rapid development of intra-Chinese co-productions in the industry under CEPA. Aiming to attract itself to Mainland markets and please the Mainland authorities, *Infernal Affairs III* not only deliberately jettisoned its 'mirror-image theme of moral confusion'[129] that was carried by the first and the second installments, it also cast the legendary Mainland actor Chen Daoming as an undercover public security bureau officer.

The trilogy's storyline and character portrayal reveal a wide array of cross-references to Hollywood classics such as *The Godfather* Trilogy (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1972, 1974, 1990), *Heat* (dir. Michael Mann, 1995) and *Face/Off* (dir. John Woo, 1997), together with popular Hollywood TV series *Miami Vice* (1984-1989) and *The Sopranos* (1999-2006). The trilogy also pays homage to Johnnie To's *Running out of Time*. According to the interview conducted by film scholar Gina Marchetti with the trilogy's directors Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, the idea for the films was inspired by John Woo's *Face/Off* (1997).[130] Lau and Mak considered changing faces and bodies to be less credible and therefore for *Infernal Affairs*, they endowed the central protagonists Lau Kin-ming (Andy Lau) and Chan Wing-yan (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) with double undercover identities. Lau Kin-ming is a triad member recruited to a deep cover infiltration of the Hong Kong police force, while Chan Wing-yan is an undercover police officer within the triads. *Infernal Affairs II*, introduces the character Ngai Wing-Hau (Francis Ng) who, resonating with the Michael Corleone figure in *The Godfather*, takes over the family triad business following the murder of his father, the head of the triads. The *Infernal Affairs* trilogy deals with issues of individual heroism, morality and loyalty. In the trilogy, police and gangsters, in the view of Davis and Yeh, 'no longer represent a Manichean opposition, but a ying-yang equilibrium, a kind of moral détente'[131]. Johnnie To's *Running out of Time* contained a similar narrative pattern, in which Cheung (Andy Lau)'s criminal behavior is cloaked with a kind of heroism in Johnnie To's representation, and Cheung's counterpart, police inspector Ho (Lau Ching-wan), is portrayed as gradually developing great sympathy and admiration towards Cheung.

Alan Mak and Andrew Lau both had a wealth of filmmaking experience in the Hong Kong film industry before they made *Infernal Affairs*: Mak was a prolific scriptwriter and director; Lau was a cinematographer working with many established filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai and Ringo Lam. This experience enabled Mak and Lau to exercise their filmmaking with a unique insight for the story construction and aesthetic approach of *Infernal Affairs*. Police-triads stories have proliferated Hong Kong cinema since the early 1980s with productions such as *Man on the Brink* (dir. Alex Cheung Kwok-ming, 1981), *Road Warriors* (dir. Danny Lee Sau-yin, 1987), *Rich and Famous* (dir. Taylor Wong, 1987), *Gameboy Kids* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 1992) and *City Cop* (dir. Herman Yau, 1995).

However, with a star-studded cast (Andy Lau, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Leon Lai, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Edison Chen, Shawn Yue, Carina Lau, Kelly Chen and Sammi Cheung), carefully planned and sophisticatedly written script, and stylish cinematography, the trilogy transcended the conventional Hong Kong action film. It helped to change the scenario observed by film critic Tony Rayns that most pre-1997 Hong Kong films were 'sloppily improvised without shooting scripts'[132] and the films' 'ideas and sometimes whole scenes were freely plagiarized from other movies, local and foreign'[133]. *Infernal Affairs*'s success not only brought in numerous local and international film festival awards, but it also led to its Hollywood remake *The Departed* (2006), winner of Best Picture at the 2007's Academy Awards. Along with other action films (*PTU* [dir. Johnnie To, 2002], *New Police Story* [2004], *Seven Swords* [dir. Hark Tsui, 2005] and *The Warlords* [2007]) that have been distributed into global markets and international film circuits, Hong Kong action genre filmmaking in post-1997 have, as Vivian P. Y. Lee rightly claims, proved itself to world audiences to be 'not merely pure spectacles of violence and mesmerizing action sequences but self-conscious works of art'.[134]

The Transregionalisation/Translocalisation/Globalisation of Independent Filmmakers

Within popular genre filmmaking, the evident creativity contributed by independent filmmakers appears to be best exemplified by a version of the horror genre trend in post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. Perhaps as a response to the huge commercial success across

Southeast Asian regions achieved by psychological Japanese horror *Ringu* (dir. Hideo Nakata, 1998), which later attracted Hollywood to remake the film as *The Ring* (dir. Gore Verbinski, 2002), some Hong Kong independent filmmakers like Ann Hui and Bruce Law Chi-leung started to exercise their horror genre-bending techniques to follow a similar cinematic pattern to that created by *Ringu*. The horror genre features they produced such as *Visible Secret* (dir. Ann Hui, 2001) and *Inner Senses* (dir. Bruce Law Chi-leung, 2002) achieved critical acclaim and box office success. Later, renowned filmmaker Peter Chan Ho-sung embraced multinational resources and talents (Thailand, South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong) in producing the omnibus horror film *Three* (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, Kim Kee-woon, Peter Chan, 2002) and its sequel *Three…Extreme* (dir. Miike Takashi, Kim Kee-woon, Fruit Chan, 2004). However, other filmmakers, for instance Hark Tsui with his transitional attempt at directing a horror genre film, achieved limited success. Tsui's 2008 horror feature *Missing* received fairly few positive critical reviews and in terms of its box office receipts turned out to be a failure.[135] Such phenomena in Hong Kong film production post-1997 indicate Hong Kong independent filmmakers' increasing creative contribution to the industry and their sensitive awareness of Southeast Asian film markets and, moreover, their ambition of paralleling their filmmaking with the trends of global cinema.

What also needs to be considered here is the effect of some of the other global trends in cinema. In her article "From BitTorrent Piracy to Creative Industries: Hong Kong Cinema Emptied Out", Laikwan Pang examines the recent worldwide tendency to develop creative industries primarily for economic reasons and resulting from the increase in capital flow across nations and media.[136] Pang suggests that in keeping with this new global phenomena, Hong Kong has transformed largely into a finance centre that succeeds only in attracting media attention and international investment and as a result, Hong Kong cinema is no longer identifiable within the traditional concept of a cultural manifestation; in this respect she believes cinema has become an integrated part of government devices in the creative industries designed to maintain and develop economic power.[137] Pang sets this argument in the context of Hong Kong's attempts at combating piracy but paints a clear picture of what she perceives to be an industry that is in decline largely as a result of losing its cultural identity.[138] However Pang does go on to discuss the "branding" of Hong Kong, through its

HAF forums and entertainment expos for example, in the context of city branding as a global phenomenon, such as an Olympic host city might undertake, and this again borders on the concept of how we might define the local in the context of cinema.[139] As such, Pang's analysis appears to invite the consideration of regional as more of an economic entity than a cultural one. The broadening of the funding base and the increasing scope of the collaborations with which Hong Kong filmmakers are aligning themselves clearly invites a re-examination of exactly what constitutes a Hong Kong film. However certain hallmarks are taken as a given. For instance Wong Kar-wai's relocation of his entire filmmaking apparatus to Argentina did not make *Happy Together* an Argentinian film despite the huge role played by his many locally based collaborators. This theme is returned to at several points later in the thesis where the identity of Hong Kong cinema is considered in more detail.

Apart from various independent veteran filmmakers such as Wong Kar-wai (see Chapter Three), Ann Hui and Hark Tsui who have applied themselves in continuing to define the history of Hong Kong cinema post-1997, the achievements of the new up and coming independent filmmakers' should also invite a rethinking of the dynamics of Hong Kong film production during the post-transition period. The theory that Hong Kong has become more of a centre for the funding of films and not so much the production of films is indeed debatable, particularly since it is no longer clear as to what exactly constitutes a "Hong Kong film". The increasing numbers of trans-regional collaborations that are witnessed certainly blur the boundaries to some extent; however, several of the films that have emanated from these new and relatively successful filmmakers can clearly be identified with Hong Kong by dint of the fact that the filmmakers themselves are unmistakably identified with Hong Kong. Among these, Pang Brothers' (Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang Fat) 2002 psychological horror thriller *The Eye*, achieved impressive worldwide box office revenues of over HK$100 million.[140] Treated in the manner of a blending of commercial genre and the distinctive visual style from art house cinema, Wong Ching-po and Lee Kung-lok's 2003 suspenseful *Fu Bo* provokes critical attention such as that of Vivian P.Y. Lee, which centres on the film's 'expressionistic sketches'[141], with the aim of capturing the film's extreme psychological states and characters' hallucinations, together

with the film's commentary on Macau's social uncertainty and existential crisis during its pre-handover period.[142]

Also located in Macau, Edmond Peng Ho-cheung's 2006 drama *Isabella* focuses on the telling of a comic and moving story of the developing relationship between two protagonists, Ma Chun Shing (Chapman To Man-chak) and Cheung Pik Yan (Isabella Leung Lok-sze), through stylised visual presentation. After directing several mainstream features like *You Shoot, I Shoot* (2001), *Men Suddenly in Black* (2003), *Beyond Our Ken* (2004) and *A.V.* (2005) that afforded Peng considerable recognition from the industry, *Isabella* has been claimed by the film critic Derek Elley as a film that proves the establishment of Peng's art house credentials.[143] Vivian P. Y. Lee has also noted Peng's transition in discussing his romanticised vision of presenting Macau's landscape (as if in a fairy-tale) and erotic portrayal of Ma Chun Shing's sexual fantasy towards Cheung Pik Yan in the film.[144] In brief, these new independent filmmakers continue to inherit the tradition of Hong Kong cinema within various genres while at the same time reenergising them through exercising innovative and experimental filmmaking techniques. However, the Pang Brothers' contribution perhaps best exemplifies Hong Kong's new independent filmmakers' achievements because they set the example of film production in many respects and consequently deserve closer analysis.

The Pang Brothers

The Pang commenced their careers in Hong Kong by working in post-production (as colourist and editor) in the film and television industries. By the time of their first collaborative directorial debut *Bangkok Dangerous* (1999), the brothers had already established themselves in the Thai film industry. In 2002, the Pang Brothers co-directed the pan-Asian psychological horror thriller *The Eye*. This film was notable not only because the film drew upon financial resources and talents from across South Asian territories like Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand, but also because the film courted a new demand for 'C-horror'[145] from audiences that even reached out to European countries such as the UK, Italy and Spain.[146] In addition, *The Eye* spawned two sequels *The Eye 2* (dir. Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang Fat, 2004) and *The Eye 10* (dir. Oxide Pang Chun and Danny Pang

Fat, 2005), which was subsequently chosen in 2007 for production by Tom Cruise's production company as a Hollywood remake starring Jessica Alba. For post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, *The Eye* added another entry into the record of Hollywood remakes of Asian films alongside *Infernal Affairs* (2002, 2003).

By 2007, the Pang Brothers had "travelled" beyond Asia by directing a Hollywood version of *Dangerous Bangkok*, working with Nicholas Cage and prolific Hollywood screenwriter Jason Richman. In the same year, with the help of the Pang Brothers, Sony Pictures Entertainment (US) managed to secure US$55 million box office revenue worldwide from an investment of US$16 million in releasing the horror genre film *The Messengers*.[147] The commercial success of this film underlined the Pang brothers' capacity for transferring their skills to Hollywood despite apparent cultural boundaries. The success of *The Eye* and *The Messengers* in western markets proves that the Pang Brothers have opened up a new cinematic space for Hong Kong cinema for western audiences. It challenges Western audiences' perception of Hong Kong cinema, namely, a long association with solely the one kind of genre – namely kung fu/action and a limited number of directors like Jackie Chan and John Woo. In taking this line of discussion further, it is necessary to briefly assess how these two films were embraced by Western audiences and critics.

***The Eye* (2002)**

The Eye is set partly in Hong Kong and partly in Thailand, and tells the story of 18-year-old Mann's (Malaysian-born actress Angelica Lee Sin-je) shuddering "adventure" of witnessing and encountering ghosts after she has a corneal transplant. The narrative is reminiscent in parts of the successful 1999 Hollywood thriller *The Sixth Sense*, and is adopted by the Pang Brothers into a film with familiar cultural resonance for Asian audiences. With its idiosyncratic directing style, *The Eye* is "spookier" and maintains a more genuinely disturbing atmosphere compared to *The Sixth Sense*. The cinematic formula that the Pang Brothers create not only attracted local audiences but also proved to have international appeal. Western film critics appreciated the Pang Brothers' directing skills and difference in style that were adopted in this film. Few references were made in these

reviews that stressed or even mentioned the film's cultural difference from Western conventions. Film critic David Rooney wrote of the film:

> …capable f/x work [motion graphics/visual FX], an ominous electronic score, sharp editing and camera, and a convincingly imperiled lead in Lee make this [*The Eye*] a better-than-- average genre entry.[148]

In another review Tony Rayns concurred by stating that the film 'delivers the statutory genre set pieces, filters them through the consciousness of a disabled protagonist, and does everything the film-makers can think of visually, aurally and tonally to make them seem fresh.'[149] Journalist Steve Biodrowski compared this film with the Japanese horror *Ringu* and considered *The Eye* as one of the best Asian ghost films for its more flamboyant camera angles, editing, special effects, and more large-scale thrills.[150] Western audiences were also attracted by the theme, concept and chilling atmosphere of the film. According to online reviews of the film, the cultural boundary of the film in the eyes of the audiences seems to have been totally diminished by the powerful suspense and genuine horror that the Pang Brothers created for the film.[151]

***The Messengers* (2007)**

Set in North Dakota, *The Messengers* tells a haunting story of how one family deals with their troubled daughter who sees ghosts at a farm house that the family has just occupied. The film was directed within similar generic parameters as *The Eye* (2002), in order to aim for the best possible commercial return in primarily targeting US markets. Columbia Pictures, the production and distribution company for *The Messengers*, only assigned the Pang Brothers the task of being responsible for the film's directing, unlike *The Eye* (2002), in which the Pang Brothers were also the primary force for the film's editing and screenplay as well as the directing. Nevertheless, the Pang Brothers did manage to imbue the material with their specific perspective. Jason Shuman, one of the film's producers, says that he appreciated the Pang Brothers' vision, their sense of style, horror and their way of creating tension.[152] According to some film reviews the Pang Brothers' 'sharp photographic style and a liking for baroque scare-sequences'[153] did not appear to have been modified for

US consumption.[154] To conclude, the Pang Brothers successfully created a trend of horror genre filmmaking for Hong Kong cinema. The popularity and success of the trend attracted Hollywood's attention and as a consequence the Pang Brothers crossed the boundary to Hollywood, despite the difference in cultural background.

Media cultural translocalisation/transregionalisation/globalisation

The Messenger constitutes just one example of collaborative production schemes between Hong Kong and the West; indeed since 1997, joint ventures between Asian countries and Hollywood have increased sharply in Hong Kong,[155] as have co-productions within Asia. Major production companies and even some of medium sized companies have joined the trend and co-produced films with Japan and Singapore based enterprises.[156] The co-produced *Moonlight Express* (dir. Daniel Lee Yan-kong, 1999), *Tokyo Raiders* (dir. Jingle Ma Cho-shing, 2000), *2000 AD* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 2000) and *Para Para Sakura* (dir. Jingle Ma Cho-shing, 2000) all achieved impressive box office receipts within Hong Kong and in the markets of Southeast Asia. In Davis and Yeh's study of East Asian screen industries, this trend is labeled under the category of 'Intra-Asian co-producers'[157], where production companies such as Hong Kong Applause Pictures, South Korea's Sidus Show East and CJ Entertainment, Japan's Kadokawa and Singapore's Raintree Media Corp collaborated with each other with the objective of producing films for Asian markets.[158]

Applause Pictures

Established in 2000 by the prolific Hong Kong filmmakers Peter Chan Ho-sun, Teddy Chan Tak-sum and Allen Fung Yi-ching, Applause Pictures's initiative was to invest in local Asian films and directors who were capable of making commercial art films, and secondly, to repackage genre pictures to stimulate new interest in popular forms.[159] Since then, Applause Pictures have continued to produce films that 'show commitment to trans-border co-productions with local talent, location shooting and new twists on genre'[160] such as *One Fine Spring Day* (dir Hur Jin-ho, 2001), a romantic drama that Applause co-financed with, in the opinion of film critic Mark Russell,[161] one of Korea's largest

production companies Sidus Pictures and Japan's major studio Shochiku. The film featured an all Korean cast, which as far as Davis and Yeh's are concerned, was aimed at targeting markets in Korea, Japan and China.[162]

Another noteworthy film that exemplifies Applause's pan-Asian filmmaking strategies is *The Marriage Certificate* (2001). A comedy drama reflecting the married lives of contemporary urban Mainlanders, the film was directed by Huang Jianxin, a renowned Mainland China filmmaker of the fifth generation, and featured an all Mainland China cast. Applause co-financed the film with state-owned film studios in Mainland China, namely Beijing Forbidden City Film and Xian Film Studio & Xian Ginwa Film Co.,[163] allying with European-based distribution company Fortissimo for the film's international release.[164] Vivian P. Y. Lee argues that Applause's initiative should be ascribed to its co-founders Peter Chan and Allen Fung's origins and their long track record of transnational filmmaking backgrounds.[165] Indeed, Chan and Fung both lived, studied, and worked across Asia and North America. This transcultural experience helped to shape their filmmaking enterprise in its cross-cultural scope. According to Lee's discussion, Applause Pictures pushed its film production onto a higher level of international connection in 2005 by forming a joint venture, Morgan and Chan Films, with Hollywood film production company Ruddy Morgan.[166]Applause's achievement represents a contribution of new blood to dynamic reconstructive filmmaking methods for the post-1997 Hong Kong film industry, and also redefines Hong Kong cinema's position on the map of global cinema. Furthermore, leading with the company's pan-Asian film productions, the post-1997 Hong Kong film industry shows distinct signs of creativity and revival. It should be pointed out here that up until 2006 the Hong Kong film industry's annual release rate had dropped to a historical low of 55 films in 2005, and 51 in 2006.[167] However it can also be argued that the quality of those films is higher than ever.

As one facet of the 'pan-Asian clusters'[168], 'Euro-Asian alliances'[169] have also played their part in contributing to the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. In Hong Kong's case, this has taken the form of the collaboration of local production companies with Europe-based film distribution companies such as Fortissimo, Block 2 and Paradis.

Fortissimo established its office in Hong Kong in 1997 and its collaboration with local production received a subsequent boost. Consequently many high quality independent Hong Kong films have received European financial support and the benefit of worldwide distribution campaigns, for instance Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood For Love* and *2046* (see Chapter Three), the Pang Brothers' *The Eye* series, Jeffery Lau's *Chinese Odyssey* (see Chapter Two), Peter Chan Ho-sun's *Going Home* (2002), Lo Chi-leung's *Koma* (2004) and Hark Tsui's *Seven Swords* (2005), with the majority of these films generating promising box office revenues and receiving critical acclaim. Moreover, Hollywood film studio Columbia Pictures also established its own film production company in Hong Kong and consequently helped to create some of the most successful co-productions to date, such as Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and Stephen Chow's *Ku Fu Hustle* (2004) (see Chapter Two).

A closer examination of the industrial success of two of the Applause Pictures' productions, namely *Golden Chicken* (2002) and *Perhaps Love* (2005) now follows.

***Golden Chicken* (2002)**

In *Golden Chicken*, director Chiu leads the audience through a re-visitation of contemporary Hong Kong's historic moments whilst experiencing its local culture by presenting the life story of local prostitute Kum (Sandra Ng Kwan-yu). The film's experimental narrative sequences, the leading actress Sandra Ng's performance (winning Best Actress at the Taiwan Golden Horse Awards in 2003), polished cinematography, script and direction, all reflect the film's producer Peter Chan Ho-sun's approach to quality commercial art films following his establishing of Applause Pictures. *Golden Chicken* attained very respectable local box office revenues and critical acclaim.

One particular aspect of the film that drew critical attention is its challenge to the underlining colonial history and politics of Hong Kong. It portrays the irony in the fact that significant historical moments seem to have had minimal impact on a certain group of Hong Kongers who are at the bottom end of the social and economic spectrum.[170] Gary

Needham claims that, to this social group, the appeal and impact of popular culture, cinema and television appears to dominate their personal and everyday experience and act far more significantly than any of the historical and economic events.[171] A number of scenes in the film suggest this implication, where the characters in the film show far more interest in a popular Cantonese TV series, for instance, *The Bund* (1980), which made Chow Yun-fat such a well-known local star, and Jackie Chan's earlier appearance in films like *Drunken Master* (1978) as opposed to the momentous historical events, such as the handover of sovereignty or the Asian financial crisis, that are being reported simultaneously on TV. The ignorance, or as has been suggested by Needham as 'precedence',[172] over political issues afforded by the film's characters provides an interesting pursuit of allegorical drama.

Golden Chicken was nominated for Best Film at the 2003 Hong Kong Film Awards, but ultimately lost out in that competition to *Infernal Affairs* (2002). This was perhaps unsurprising. Still, the balance between the nostalgic portrayal and comic elements carried by *Golden Chicken* represents a psychosocial response to the social consciousness in postcolonial transitioning Hong Kong, and it reinvents the genre of the lowbrow slapstick Hong Kong comedy into a humour cloaked stylistic depiction.

What is also interesting about this film is that it can be read as the director Samson Chiu's intention to invite the viewer to re-think the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, its ex-coloniser Britain and Mainland China under the present political transformation. The conflict between Hong Kongers and the Mainlanders is highlighted by the rivalry between local escorts (Kum and her associates) and those from Mainland China, who are referred to as "northern chickens", figuratively meaning "prostitutes from the Northern regions" (it is a local disparaging neology for women who are from Mainland China and become embroiled in the sex trade in Hong Kong). How Mainlanders perceive Hong Kong has also been highlighted in the film, even more so in *Golden Chicken* 2, a sequel released a year later. The character Kum's cousin Quincy (Jacky Cheung) is a typical example, as a Mainland Chinese immigrant, Quincy still sees Hong Kong as the capitalist heaven where he can make quick money and become wealthy.

An exploration of Hong Kong's reconciliation with the 'China factor'[173] can be seen in numerous post-1997 Hong Kong films within various genres. Examples include Fruit Chan's social drama *Made in Hong Kong* (1997), *The Longest Summer* (1998), *Little Cheung* (1999), *Durian Durian* (2000), *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2001) and his recent horror feature *Dumplings* (2004) (see Chapter Four) and Wong Kar-wai's futuristic *2046* (2004) (see Chapter Three). It is important to point out that among the explorations that have been led by post-1997 Hong Kong cinema, one thematic development that has become particularly apparent is the portrayal of Hong Kongers migrating to Mainland China.

In the case of pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema addressing the migratory theme, there is a general attempt to paint a picture of how Mainlanders, who legally or illegally cross the border to Hong Kong, struggle to settle in and are desperate in their search for self-identity. Some of these have been more successful than others, examples can be found in films like *To Be Number One* (dir. Man Kit Poon,1991), *Gigolo and Whore (*dir. Terry Tong Gei-ming, *1991), Her Fatal Ways* series (dir. Alfred Cheung Kin-ting, 1991, 1993, 1994) and *Comrades, Almost A Love Story* (dir. Peter Chan Ho-sun, 1996), in which their leading characters are all Mainland immigrants portrayed on various "journeys" while they attempt a search for their identities.

However, in their films since the handover, Hong Kong filmmakers have diverted their approach into alternative angles in commencing to portray a rather different picture of Hong Kongers encounters with Mainland China. In films like *Needing You* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Kar-fai, 2000), *Love For All Seasons* (dir. Johnnie To and Wai Kar-fai, 2002), *Perhaps Love* (dir. Peter Chan Ho-sun, 2005) and *Mr. Cinema* (dir. Samson Chiu Leung-chun, 2007), directors all locate their viewpoint in Mainland China when portraying the dislocation that the characters experience. If pre-1997 Hong Kong cinema carries out a sense of what Ackbar Abbas describes as 'first-line defense against [Mainland China's] political absorption'[174] and the phobia and anxiety of Hong Kongness regarding the 1997 handover, post-1997 Hong Kong cinema provokes a sense of acceptance about Hong Kong's destiny and raises a question of how well Hong Kongness can integrate with Mainland China. In contrast, other Hong Kong films have continued to portray a sense of

uncertainty and doubt towards "China": films like Tsang Kan-cheong's 1997 horror thriller *Intruder* and Johnnie To's 2004 action feature *Breaking News*, still paint stereotypically negative images of Mainlanders.

Golden Chicken's success constituted another notable entry into Applause Pictures's filmography, along with the erotic drama *Jan Dara* (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, 2001), *The Eye* (2002), *Three* (2002), and *Three…Extreme* (2004). Consequently it is essential to make another closer assessment of the company's first original musical genre film that achieved such impressive worldwide box office revenues, *Perhaps Love* (dir. Peter Chan Ho-sun, 2005). More specifically, the film illustrates the direct benefits resulting from CEPA, mentioned already in this chapter.

CEPA benefits for post-1997 Hong Kong filmmaking

As I have argued in my Introduction, since its caption in 2004 CEPA has offered new possibilities for Hong Kong film companies to market and distribute their productions directly in Mainland China. Moreover, because CEPA relaxed regulations on Hong Kong and Mainland China co-productions, the number of co-productions between Hong Kong and Mainland China, according to Zhou Xing and Zhao Jing, went up to nearly 40 in 2006,[175] four times the number of co-productions that were made pre-CEPA (see also Appendix: Table 4 for annual number of Hong Kong-Mainland China co-productions 1997-2007). The fact that co-productions do not necessarily have to be filmed in China and their film plots do not need to be China-related, encourages creativity in the production of films that represent Hong Kong's unique localism. Films like *Infernal Affairs II and III* (2003), *Ku Fu Hustle* (2004), *2046* (2004), *Initial D* (2005) and *Seven Swords* (2005) all benefited from financial support resulting from the fact that they were co-financed, and subsequently generated excellent box office revenues from the massive Mainland market. As a representative pan-Asian production company based in Hong Kong, Applause Pictures also exploited the opportunities for cashing in on the potential Mainland markets opened up by the CEPA in releasing its first attempt at a big-budget, star-studded production onto the Mainland markets, namely *Perhaps Love*.

Perhaps Love's challenge to Hollywood supremacy

The Mainland Chinese film industry has been threatened by Hollywood imports since China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO). At the beginning of the new millennium, Mainland China's box office was more or less dominated by Hollywood blockbusters such as the *Harry Potter* series (2001-2011), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001-03), the *Spider-Man* series (2002-07), *The Matrix* trilogy (1999-2003) and the *Star Wars* series (1997-2005). Dubbed the 'first Hollywood-style Chinese musical'[176] as one of the key selling points for *Perhaps Love*'s promotional campaign, director Peter Chan Ho-sun's ambition to win over Mainland China markets by competing with Hollywood dominance was obvious. The film's film-within-a-film narrative chronicles the love triangle between a woman and two men and adds *Moulin Rouge* style costumes, flamboyant mise-en-scène and exuberant musical performances.

The film's dialogue and the songs are in Chinese Mandarin, and principal shooting took place in Shanghai and Beijing.[177] The film constantly flashes backwards and forwards between the past (Beijing) and the present (Shanghai), which offers a sense of nostalgic ambiguity between memory and reality. This aesthetic approach resonates with the style adopted by the Mainland filmmaker Chen Keige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) and *Temptress Moon* (1996).

The film's objective of aiming at Mainland markets is also evident in the film's cast. The leading character roles are taken by Zhou Xun, Jacky Cheung and Takeshi Kaneshiro. Zhou Xun started her film career by making her debut performance in Mainland director Xie Tieli's costume drama *Strange Tales Amongst the Old and Desolate Tomb* (1991). Zhou's screen persona was however most notably established in her debut TV performance in the popular drama *Palace of Desire* (dir. Li Shaohong, 1998), ever since which Zhou had gradually grown into an A-list star of contemporary Chinese cinema. Jacky Cheung is famously known by Mainland audiences as one of Hong Kong's "Four Heavenly Kings" and is generally referred to by Mainland audiences as the "God of Singers". Besides his singing career, Cheung had also acted in *Days of Being Wild* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 1990), *A*

Chinese Ghost Story (dir. Tony Ching Siu-tung, 1990) and *The Eagle Shooting Heroes* (dir. Jeffrey Lau, 1993). Takeshi Kaneshiro's initial popularity in Mainland China was mainly attributed to his handsome appearance, although he also became associated with art house productions, such as Wong Kar-wai's classic *Chungking Express*. Peter Chan Ho-sun also cast Korean television star Ji Jin-hee in the film to maximise the film's star attraction for the Mainland market as Ji Jin-hee's 2003 Korean drama *Jewel in the Palace* had been highly popular in Mainland China.

In order to maximise the film's 'high concept' model, Peter Chan formed a partnership with Hollywood-based film production company Ruddy Morgan in order to achieve an authentic Hollywoodised form and content.[178] It is debatable whether this aim was achieved in practice. Some scholars have argued, for example, that the film 'does not measure up to the established benchmark for Western musicals, not quite due to flaws in plot and characterization but the musical score.'[179] Nevertheless, *Perhaps Love*, as Applause's first attempt to open the door to Mainland China markets, generated very creditable box office revenues in Mainland China, exceeding those of the Hollywood blockbuster *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005), which was screening at the same time.[180] According to an online news report, Mainland audiences were attracted by the film's glamorous fashion and flamboyant setting.[181] Also, the film brought director Peter Chan numerous film awards from film festivals in Mainland China.[182] Due to the immense success it achieved in Mainland markets as an "outside" action and comedy genre film, *Perhaps Love* sets an encouraging example for post-1997 Hong Kong cinema.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to map the trajectory of Hong Kong cinema since the handover, the intention being to assess this development through discussing the parameters of the industry in the pre- and post-1997 handover era, the film policies that have been introduced since the handover, and more primarily the filmmaking trajectory of prominent figures within the geographical context of local, regional and global, in order to provide an overview of to what extent the political transformation has shaped local cinema and the industry. The historical transition did indeed have a bearing; however, there are many other

factors that have shaped the Hong Kong film industry, such as piracy, the Asian financial crisis, the SARS pandemic, increasing trans-border circulation of capital, technology, information and human resources and globalisation, which have also all had a bearing on its present status and future. However there is conclusive evidence that the 1997 handover did have a positive impact on the industry (for example a transition-triggered new trend in cinematic exploration; plus the benefits of CEPA). This has certainly become evident in answering the various hypotheses in this section and will be returned to and analysed in more detail in the Conclusions section of this thesis, following a series of case studies of three notable and representative Hong Kong directors, Stephen Chow, Wong Kar-wai and Fruit Chan, all of whom were very active in this period and deliberately chosen for their diversity. Chow is regarded as having created the *mo lei-tau* subgenre of comedy, with the *mo lei-tau* films that Chow has made all bearing a strong personal signature and always appearing to carry a special "magnetic" appeal to Cantonese Chinese language-speaking audiences.

Distinctly different from Chow's style of bordering on a personality cult, but equally no less influential, is art house turned mainstream director Wong Kar-wai. Owing to his provocative aesthetic style, Wong Kar-wai is highly regarded both locally and internationally as a major art house auteur.[183] In contrast to the above two film makers, Fruit Chan is known for his realistic capture of lower-class Hong Kong life, with occasionally this capture being intertwined with fantasised filmic portrayal. Chan's idiosyncratic independent filmmaking methods (hand-held cameras, low budget approach and frequent employment of amateur actors) make him distinct, not just from Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, but in fact most other Hong Kong filmmakers. As will become apparent during the case studies, it is fascinating to see how these three very different filmmakers have progressed during the period covered by this thesis. As might be expected, they have been at times both differently and similarly affected by the various diverse factors that have had a bearing on the state of the industry during this particular epoch in the development of Hong Kong cinema.

Notes

[1] Laikwan Pang, 'Postcolonial Hong Kong Cinema: Utilitarianism and (Trans)Local', in *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2007, p. 413.
[2] Lily Kong, 'Shaw Cinema Enterprise and Understanding Cultural Industries', in Poshek Fu (ed.), *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008), pp. 32-33.
[3] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 52.
[4] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 51.
[5] Poshek Fu, 'The 1960s: Modernity, Youth Culture, and Hong Kong Cantonese Cinema', in Poshek Fu and David Desser (eds.), *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 79.
[6] Poshek Fu, 'The 1960s: Modernity, Youth Culture, and Hong Kong Cantonese Cinema', p. 79.
[7] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 36.
[8] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire*, p. 36.
[9] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 47-48.
[10] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, pp. 47-48.
[11] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 54; D&B Films Company Ltd was founded by Sammo Hung (Hong Kong actor/martial artists/producer/director), Dickson Poon (Hong Kong entrepreneur) and John Shum (Hong Kong actor/producer); Cinema City was founded by Raymond Wong Pak-ming (Hong Kong actor/director/screenwriter/producer), Karl Maka (Hong Kong actor/director/producer) and Dean Shek (Hong Kong actor/director/producer).
[12] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003), p. 174.
[13] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 54
[14] The data is collected from Internet Movie Database, http://www.imdb.com/company/co0000295, http://www.imdb.com/company/co0074316, http://www.imdb.com/company/co0096034, accessed 05 December 2009.
[15] *Aces Go Places* earned over HK$26 million, *My Lucky Stars* earned HK$30 million, and *God of Gamblers* earned HK$37 million, see Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 256.
[16] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 54-56.
[17] David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries* (London: Sage, 2007), p. 233.
[18] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 261.
[19] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 75-80.
[20] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 25.
[21] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 126.
[22] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 126.
[23] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 126.
[24] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003), p. 176.
[25] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy*, p. 176.
[26] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy*, p. 177.
[27] The average ticket price at the time was around US$6.25, while the pirated version cost around US$4. See Motion Picture Industry Association; see also Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 262.

[28] Morris Goldstein, *The Asian Financial Crisis: Causes Cures and Systemic Implications* (Washington, DC: Peterson Institute Press, 1998), p. 1.
[29] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 57.
[30] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 262.
[31] *Cinemas, Film Production & Distribution in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Limited, 2004), pp. 22-23.
[32] *Shaolin Soccer* is regarded as the SAR's biggest grossing film ever, earning over HK$60 million, see *Cinemas, Film Production & Distribution in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Limited, 2004), p. 22.
[33] Sherry Xiaorui Xu, 'A Journey to the West: Hong Kong Film Auteur Wong Kar-wai's Response to Globalization?', in *The ACAH&ACSS Conference Proceedings*, 2010, p. 361.
[34] *Cinemas, Film Production & Distribution in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Limited, 2004), p. 22.
[35] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 248.
[36] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, p. 248.
[37] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, p. 248.
[38] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[39] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[40] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[41] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[42] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_production.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[43] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[44] http://www.osgh.com.hk/cn/film_exhibition.php, accessed 05 May 2011.
[45] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 192.
[46] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 249.
[47] See China Star Entertainment Ltd. Annual Report 2005, http://202.66.146.82/listco/hk/chinastar/annual/2005/ar2005.pdf, p. 4, accessed 05 may 2011.
[48] See Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 259-267; see also David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 192; see also Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 126-127.
[49] Curtin claims that unlike GH or China Star, who focus on film exhibition and distribution, Media Asia is pursuing a multimedia global strategy similar to one of its investors, the eSun conglomerate. See Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 249.
[50] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 192.
[51] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 56.
[52] Chu Yiu-wai, 'One Country Two Cultures? Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema and Co-Productions', in Kam Louie (ed.), *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), pp. 131-145.
[53] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/services/services2.htm, accessed 05 May 2011.
[54] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/services/services2.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[55] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/services/services2.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[56] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/services/services2.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[57] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/services/services2.htm, accessed 05 May 2011.
[58] Laikwan Pang, 'Postcolonial Hong Kong Cinema: Utilitarianism and (Trans)Local', in *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2007, pp. 413-430.

[59] http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/details.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[60] http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/report2011a.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[61] http://www.fso-createhk.gov.hk/accessiblility/common/Guide/Chap02-Engi02.pdf, accessed 05 May 2011.
[62] See FILMART BROCHURE, http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/glance.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[63] See FILMART BROCHURE, http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/glance.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[64] See FILMART BROCHURE, http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/glance.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[65] See HAF 2012 Report, http://www.haf.org.hk/haf/report2012.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[66] See HAF 2012 Report, http://www.haf.org.hk/haf/report2012.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[67] See HAF 2012 Report, http://www.haf.org.hk/haf/report2012.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[68] See FILMART BROCHURE, http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/glance.htm, accessed 13 September 2012.
[69] http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/report2010a.htm, accessed 05 May 2011.
[70] http://www.hkfilmart.com/filmart/report2010a.htm, accessed 05 May 2011.
[71] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/NewAction/en/background/background.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[72] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/en/home/index.htm, accessed 15 September 2012.
[73] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/NewAction/en/background/background.htm, accessed 14 September 2012.
[74] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/NewAction/en/home/home.htm, accessed 14 September 2012.
[75] http://www.fdc.gov.hk/NewAction/en/activity/activity_01.htm, accessed 14 September 2012.
[76] This trend has been discussed by Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu in their book *East Asian Screen Industries* as 'the new localism', see Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), pp. 38-54.
[77] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 261.
[78] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 123.
[79] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 292.
[80] www.imdb.com/title/tt0179110/awards, accessed 15 December 2009.
[81] The data was collected from Hong Kong Film Archive (HKFA).
[82] www.goldenharvest.com.hk/corporate/index.asp?lang=en, accessed 12 December 2009.
[83] *The Stormriders*, according to Yingjin Zhang's study, beat all Hollywood imports and climbed to first place in the 1998 Hong Kong box office ratings. See Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 271.
[84] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 270.
[85] The data was collected from Hong Kong Film Services Office.
[86] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 261.
[87] Pete Read, *The Film and Television Market in Hong Kong* (Canada: The Department of Canadian Heritage and Trade Routes Program, 2005), p. 4.
[88] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003), p. 178.
[89] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy*, p. 178.
[90] Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy*, p. 178.
[91] http://www.tela.gov.hk/document/eng/aboutus/filmcensorship.pdf, accessed 14 November 2008; the Film Censorship Ordinance was enacted in 1988, in which a three-tier film classification system was adopted. These three tiers were Category I (suitable for all ages), Category II (not suitable for Children) and Category III (for persons aged 18 or above only); the system was amended in 1995, for which a finer classification of dividing Category II into two sub-Categories was introduced. These two sub-Categories are Category IIA (not suitable for children) and Category IIB (not suitable for young persons and children); see also http://www.cedb.gov.hk/ctb/eng/film/film_1.htm, accessed 25 September 2012.
[92] http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html; see also http://www.china.org.cn/features/film/2008-03/10/content_12164452.htm, accessed 26 September 2012.
[93] http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html, accessed 26 September 2012.
[94] http://www.sarft.gov.cn/articles/2007/02/16/20070913144431120333.html; see also http://info.hktdc.com/alert/cba-e0804c-2.htm, accessed 26 September 2012.
[95] *Cinemas, Film Production & Distribution in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Limited, 2004), p. 27.

[96] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), p. 295.
[97] Milkyway Image was established in 1996, so was Star Overseas and BoB and Partners.
[98] Stephen Teo, *Director in Action: Johnnie To and the Hong Kong Action Film* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).
[99] Stephen Teo, *Director in Action*.
[100] Michael Ingham, *Johnnie To Kei-fung's PTU* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
[101] Michael Ingham, *Johnnie To Kei-fung's PTU*, pp. 65-107.
[102] Laikwan Pang, 'Masculinity in Crisis: Films of Milkyway Image and Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema', in *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2002, pp. 325-340.
[103] Laikwan Pang, 'Masculinity in Crisis', pp. 325-340.
[104] Andrew Grossman, *The Belated Auterism of Johnnie To*, www.archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/02/to, accessed 12 December 2009.
[105] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 46.
[106] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 44.
[107] Shelly Kracier, *Interview with Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai*, www.archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/18/to_and_ka-fai, accessed 15 December 2009.
[108] Shelly Kracier, *Interview with Johnnie To and Wai Ka-fai*.
[109] Andrew Grossman, *The Belated Auterism of Johnnie To*, www.archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/02/to, accessed 12 December 2009.
[110] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 46.
[111] A type of tea restaurant is commonly found in Hong Kong. As part of local culture it has also been portrayed in Fruit Chan's feature film *Little Cheung* (see Chapter Four).
[112] *Karma Chameleon: A Talk with Johnnie To*, http://www.greencine.com/article?action=view&articleID=111, accessed 13 December 2009.
[113] Dave Sanjek, *Running out of Time*, www.archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/cteq/06/41/running-out-of-time, accessed 13 December 2009.
[114] Dave Sanjek, *Running out of Time*.
[115] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 45.
[116] *Needing You* achieved HK$35.21 million box office receipts, *Love on a Diet* earned impressive HK$44.04 million and *Love For All Seasons* obtained HK$24.37 million, see Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 45.
[117] Daniel Martin, 'Another Week, Another Johnnie To Film: The Marketing and Distribution of Postcolonial Hong Kong Action Cinema', in *Film International*, vol. vii, Issue 4, 2009, p. 31.
[118] Established by entrepreneur Peter Lim Kim-ngok and film producer John Chong Ching in 1994, Media Asia is a Hong Kong-based company who specialises in film and video production and distribution of Chinese language films.
[119] Gina Marchetti, *Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's* Infernal Affairs-*The Trilogy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007).
[120] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 138-159.
[121] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 29.
[122] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 29.
[123] http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=infernalaffairs.htm, accessed 17 February 2010.
[124] Tony Rayns, 'Deep Cover', in *Sight and Sound*, vol. 14, no.1, January 2004, p. 29.
[125] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 34.
[126] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, pp. 34-35.
[127] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, pp. 34-35.
[128] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 34.
[129] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 34.

[130] Gina Marchetti, *Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's* Infernal affairs-*The Trilogy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007), pp. 177-178.
[131] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 30.
[132] Tony Rayns, 'Deep Cover', in *Sight and Sound*, vol. 14, no.1, January 2004, p. 27.
[133] Tony Rayns, 'Deep Cover', p. 27.
[134] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 138-139.
[135] http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/intl/?page=&country=MY&wk=2008W24&id=_fMISSING01, accessed 10 January 2010.
[136] Laikwan Pang, 'From BitTorrent Piracy to Creative Industries: Hong Kong Cinema Emptied Out', in Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger (eds.), *Futures of Chinese Cinema: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen Cultures* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 131-146.
[137] Laikwan Pang, 'From BitTorrent Piracy to Creative Industries: Hong Kong Cinema Emptied Out', pp. 131-146.
[138] Laikwan Pang, 'From BitTorrent Piracy to Creative Industries: Hong Kong Cinema Emptied Out', pp. 131-146.
[139] Laikwan Pang, 'From BitTorrent Piracy to Creative Industries: Hong Kong Cinema Emptied Out', pp. 139-146.
[140] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0325655/business, accessed 10 January 2010.
[141] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 68.
[142] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination*, pp. 67-68.
[143] Derek Elley, '*Isabella*', in *Variety*, http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=features2006&content=jump&jump=review&head=berlin&nav=RBerlin&articleid=VE1117929655&cs=1&query=Derek+Elley+Isabella, accessed 12 January 2010.
[144] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 77-80.
[145] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 95.
[146] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 96.
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Chapter Two: Stephen Chow Sing Chi: From Local to Global ("Glocal")

> Over the past decade or so, [Stephen] Chow has acquired something of a reputation, and I believe a formidable one, as a local cultural icon. Part of his appeal…lies in his Hong Kong-ness.[1]

As the quote from scholar S. V. Srinivas indicates, comedian, actor, author, director and producer Stephen Chow has become one of the most recognisable creative figures in Hong Kong cinema in recent decades. His specific contribution to Hong Kong film consists of the comedy subgenre that he invented almost single-handedly, namely *mo lei-tau*. This genre, which I will discuss in detail in this chapter, has added a new performing style into Hong Kong comedy and encompasses nonsensical dialogue, surreal screenplays, and absurd action. The genre's influence has permeated into Hong Kong society more generally. In everyday situations Hong Kongers have come to use Chow's classic catchphrases and adopt the mannerisms and attitudes from his films. Reliant as they are on Cantonese dialogue one could argue that this has consequently limited the extent to which Chow's films appeal to broader audiences. In his article, Srinivas goes as far to suggest that Chow's films are 'inaccessible' to outside audiences, which make him an interesting case study to discuss Hong Kong cinema's position between the local and the global.

Chow's culturally distinct local identity and the 'inaccessibility' of his films have also been discussed by Stephen Teo. In analysing the similarities of films such as *All for the Winner* (dir. Jeffrey Lau and Corey Yuen, 1990), *Fight back to School* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 1991) and *Justice, My Foot!*(dir. Johnnie To, 1992) in terms of the characteristic patterns of Chow's roles, and the clever humorous self-criticism of the underlying Hong Kongers' prejudice against Mainlanders that is reflected through his performances and his gradually established *mo lei-tau* parody that is so instantly recognisable to audiences, Teo argues that Chow represents the paradoxical postmodernism which is inherent in and unique to Hong Kong.[2] Teo also argues that in some of the aforementioned Chow films, while aimed mostly at pleasing Hong Kong audiences, the humor does not rely purely on language but also on visual puns and slapstick.[3]

Not only has Chow been noted for his cultural uniqueness, he also is considered by scholars such as Leung Wing-fai as one of the most profitable stars and, one of the most successful commercial genre filmmakers in the history of Hong Kong cinema.[4] His career breakthrough *All for the Winner* was one of the highest-grossing films of all time in Hong Kong cinema,[5] achieving HK $41 million at the local box office.[6] *Royal Tramp Part I, Part II* (dir. Wong Jing, 1992) grossed HK $77 million, which set 'a new record'.[7] Chow's first self-written and directed film *King of Comedy* (dir. Stephen Chow and Lik-chi Lee, 1999) topped the annual box office receipts rankings with over HK $29 million,[8] despite the fact that at the time the local film industry underwent a severe depression. Chow's subsequent single-handedly directed works, *Shaolin Soccer* (2001), *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) and *CJ7* (2008), all transcended the boundaries of Hong Kong cinema and achieved breakthroughs in global film markets. All three were released globally through diverse distribution channels of, for instance, theatrical runs, film festival premiere, TV broadcast and DVD circulation in regions including Southeast Asia, Europe and the USA.[9] These three films also overcame the previous inaccessibility of his films in the Mainland film market for the first time, resulting in impressive box office performances.[10]

This brief summary of Chow's career trajectory raises some intriguing questions within the framework of my thesis: was overcoming the previous inaccessibility of post-1997 Stephen Chow films to outsiders (especially to Mainland audiences) purely a coincidence, or was it a direct result of the 1997 political transition, or has it more to do with the increasing globalisation of Hong Kong cinema? Whatever the answer to these questions, the successful development of Chow's filmmaking trajectory in the realm of global cinema should encourage us to consider positively the role of Hong Kong cinema within a global context since the 1997 political handover. This chapter's intention is to approach these matters, and to investigate the influence that the handover has had on Chow's post-1997 filmmaking, primarily from an industrial perspective. However, it is necessary to begin the investigation with a review of Chow's pre-1997 career in order to form a basis for comparison.

Stephen Chow's Pre-1997 Trajectory

The commercial success (HK$41 million) of *All for the Winner* (1990) established the "legitimacy" of Chow's stardom in Hong Kong cinema. The film broke the box office record set by the 1989 film it parodies, *God of Gamblers* (which grossed HK$39 million box office receipts[11]). The film was directed by Wong Jing, whom Yingjin Zhang regards as 'a master of sensations and the sensationalistic, whose box office record has surpassed all directors in Hong Kong history'[12], and whom David Bordwell praises for the distinct postmodernism of his films.[13] For the pre-1997 period of Stephen Chow's filmmaking career, Wong Jing is an important figure. Srinivas confirms the significant contribution that Wong made to Chow's transformation into Hong Kong's '"king of comedy"'.[14] This contribution can be traced back to Chow's big box office grossing *Fight Back to School* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 1992), where Wong was the film's producer. Chow and Wong share a preference for lowbrow slapstick vulgarity, and the latter is considered by many scholars and critics as one of the important elements of Chow's *mo lei-tau* genre.[15] In order to understand Chow's pre-1997 career development, it is necessary to take a closer look at the history of *mo lei-tau* genre films in Hong Kong as it lays some of the grounds for my conception of how Stephen Chow absorbed generic conventions, and then defined the characteristics of the genre by injecting it with his own unique style. Chow's "invention" of *mo lei-tau* propelled the genre into becoming a local cinematic and cultural phenomenon and, as Yingjin Zhang argues, it fueled the development of Hong Kong cinema to its peak in the early 1990s.[16] Nevertheless, at this stage (pre-1997) the popularity of the genre was purely limited to the local.

Mo lei-tau originally emerged as a colloquial expression in the dialect of Southeastern Guangdong Province, which borders Hong Kong. The expression has different meanings in different parts of the province. For people in the central city of Foshan, it usually describes an obscure form of dialogue with no definite motivation sense, or purpose. For people in Shunde, a district in the Pearl River Delta, the term is more commonly employed in the context of swearing and to refer to mentally incompetent people. According to the

Contemporary Chinese Dictionary 2009 Edition,[17] *mo lei-tau* is defined as an adjective that means 'vulgar', 'random' and 'meaningless'. According to Bryan Chang, the word derives from the Cantonese slang *Moleitaugau*, which literally translates as 'without head or tail - absurdity or nonsense',[18] and is associated with cultural concepts such as 'popular', 'grass roots', 'postmodern', as well as with colloquial Cantonese expressions such as gweima (playful and humorous), kei-lei (nerdy), mah-lut (vulgar), zhu-up (idiotic remark), gaur-siu (joking), and chui-shui (blabber).[19] All of these terms and associations indicate an affinity with a form of earthy and rustic comedy, which is how a linguistic concept came to be transformed into a cinematic genre. According to Chang, the first film that can be identified as a clear example of a *mo lei-tau* genre, is the martial arts comedy *Legend of the Owl* (dir. David Chiang Da-wei, 1981).[20]

After the decline of Shaw Brothers' film empire, which resulted in the decline of Mandarin cinema and the gradual takeover of the local market by Cantonese cinema, with a subsequent shifting in focus from film production to television, the Shaws concentrated on cultivating the domestic market for their diverse television formats including TV series, variety and talent shows such as the annual Miss Hong Kong contest. Most of these programmes were made in Cantonese and achieved popularity among local audiences. Indeed the popularity of television in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s launched a rivalry between television and cinema. In order to compete with television, the cinema industry started to adopt popular TV series' plots and comic gags from TV variety shows. This initiated the dominance of comedy films in Hong Kong cinema during that period. Among all the television companies, Television Broadcasts Limited, commonly known as TVB, and founded by one of the Shaw Brothers, Run Run Shaw in the late 1970s, was considered to be the leading television company, taking over local audiences 'by storm'[21]. TVB also provided 'a creative environment'[22] for writers, actors, directors and producers by serving as a training ground (TVB had been running acting and directing training courses since late 1970s) for a new generation of local talent.[23] Among those who graduated from these training courses and who remain very influential and actively working in the film industry are actors such as Chow Yun-fat, Andy Lau and Tony Leung Chiu-wai, alongside directors such as Ringo Lam, Johnnie To and Stanley Kwan. Stephen Chow's

career too took off initially in television, and it is here that his distinctive performance style emerged.

Chow's screen persona had already begun to receive attention from local audiences when he was hosting the daily children's' show *Space Shuttle 430* at TVB in 1983, not long after he graduated from the training course run by TVB. It was his unique style of hosting that won him acclaim. While on the surface his performance consisted of the familiar kind and affable big brother attitude towards the kids, he often deliberately displayed a sarcastic, even rude attitude towards them. Audiences found Chow's sly jokes and impudent behavior amusing and entertaining. Chow subsequently acted in the sitcoms and drama series, *My Brother's Girlfriend* (1986) and *The Journey of Life* (1987).

The former initiated a working relationship with director Lik-chi Lee, who became a pivotal figure in Chow's production team, enjoying a long-term collaboration with Chow up to *Kung Fu Hustle*. *The Journey of Life*, on the other hand, paved the way for Chow's cinema debut in the crime thriller *Final Justice* (dir. Parkman Wong, 1988) where he played a gangster. Demonstrating his propensity for straight acting, this film won Chow the award of best supporting actor at the 25th Taiwan Golden Horse Film Festival.[24] This award also helped to boost the audience's familiarity with Chow in Taiwan.

Chow's now legendary comic *mo lei-tau* persona only really began to emerge fully in two hit TVB drama series, *The Final Combat* (1989) and *The Justice of Life* (1989). The former series, a costume martial arts genre, was set in ancient times. Chow played a character who, although cowardly and irresponsible, somehow becomes an accidental hero through his quick wit and a slice of luck. The series' plots clichéd some ideas from novels written by renowned Hong Kong *wu xia* novelist Jing Yong. In the films that Chow made in later years one can detect the deliberate subversion and spoofing of the ideas from Jing Yong's novels in order to create unorthodox situational comedic drama that would appeal to audiences, which constitutes another important element of the *mo lei-tau* genre. Many of the catchphrases created by Chow's character in the *The Final Combat* series, such as "sit down, drink a cup of tea, eat a bun, and talk slowly"[25] became so famous that they entered

everyday language in Hong Kong. *The Justice of Life* was set in urban Hong Kong with a popular triad theme, and again set records for the reception of a TVB series. Chow and Man Ta Ng (who also later became another long-term collaborator in Chow's production team) played son and father in the series. The brother-like relationship between the two offered local audiences an unconventional perspective on family relations. Chow's character's improprieties can be viewed as disrespectful towards his father, Ng, and yet it created a comedic chemistry to which the audience was highly receptive. According to Yonggong Shi and Qiongxiong Liu in discussing Chow's screen image, the series was eventually voted one of the top five most popular series in the history of TVB programming.[26] Similar narratives characterise many of Chow's highest grossing films such as *All for the Winner*, *Fight Back to School* trilogy (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 1991, 1992, 1993), *King of Beggars* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung, 1992) and *The Flirting Scholar* (dir. Lik-chi Lee, 1993).

As noted earlier, resulting from the Shaw Brothers decision to shift their focus from film production to running a television business, Mandarin films began losing their dominant position in the industry. Certain talented filmmakers left Shaw Brothers and started to form their own film studios, among which Raymond Chow and Leonard Ho were perhaps the most notable (establishing film production studio Golden Harvest, which had become 'the dominant force in Chinese commercial cinema'[27] by the end of the 1970s). As Michael Curtin has pointed out, GH not only played the role of the films' financier, they also generally acted as the films' distributor for their filming projects.[28] Other film studios such as Cinema City and D&B were also successful and soon developed into major suppliers, distributors and exhibitioners of the local films to the industry, benefitting from their owners' independent and flexible entrepreneurial managing ability.

The flexible relationship between film studios and actors and directors attracted many young talents who were still working in television at the time (often under long term contracts) to turn and work for them. These filmmakers were devoted to making films in Cantonese, collaborating with GH, Cinema City or D&B, in an effort to revive Cantonese-language cinema, and to specifically appeal to local Hong Kong audiences. At the same

time, as Curtin argues,[29] their films also proved successful in overseas markets (Taiwan, Japan and North America) and as a result, Hong Kong soon became the world's largest exporter of films after Hollywood, leading to its so-called "golden age". *All for the Winner* that initiated Stephen Chow's ascendancy into becoming the biggest local box office star in the 1990s is a good example to illustrate the production practices at the time. The film's directors were Jeffrey Lau, who had previously scored a major coup with his *The Haunted Cop Shop* in 1987, and Corey Yuen Kawi, who established himself making action genre films such as *Yes Madam* (1985) with Michelle Yeoh, and *She Shoots Straight* (1990) with Carina Lau. Most of the cast and crew, including Chow were recruited by GH to work on the film under what Yingchi Chu described as a 'project contract system'[30]. GH however exerted little control over the film's creative decisions, and simply monitored the smooth progress of the shooting process, and then concentrated on distributing the film. The impressive box office revenues of the film clearly confirmed the effectiveness of GH's production and distribution practices.

Until Stephen Chow started his own production company Star Overseas in 1996, his films were mainly made under precisely this form of "project contract system" for studios such as GH or Win's Film Productions.[31] Throughout the 1980s, GH, Cinema City (Golden Amusements) and D&B managed to produce commercial films that appealed to local tastes,[32] while at the same time 'exhibiting traces of improvisational exuberance lacking in films of the studio era'[33].

However, from the early 1990s when Chow's *mo lei-tau* films started to draw enthusiastic responses from local audiences, the industry began a gradual decline, the reasons for which I outlined in the previous chapter. Chow's pre-1997 output very much conformed to the production methods of the time and mainly deployed what is best described as an "instant noodle" production technique: shot with a non-complete film script within a very short period,[34] with the post-production for the films often being finished within a very short period as well. This, as already discussed in Chapter One, was the 'norm' for the filmmaking practice that had dominated the Hong Kong film industry since the mid 1980s.

Nevertheless, unlike other Hong Kong films, Chow's own output continued to be successful. They often generated impressive box office receipts and occupied top place in the box office rankings, examples being *Justice, My Foot!* (dir. Johnnie To, 1992), *Royal Tramp* (dir. Wong Jing and Ching Siu-tung, 1992), *The Flirting Scholar* (dir. Lik-chi Lee, 1993), *From Beijing with Love* (dir. Lik-chi Lee and Stephen Chow, 1994), *Sixty Million Dollar Man* (dir. Wai-man Yip, 1995), *God of Cookery* (dir. Lik-chi Lee and Stephen Chow, 1996).[35] It is worth mentioning that some of these films not only fulfilled their industrial expectations, but they were also highly praised by critics.[36]

Transition from Local to Global ("Glocal") 1997 onwards

Since Chow's 2001 kung fu comedy *Shaolin Soccer* broke all his previous box office records with receipts of over HK$60 million, a wide array of scholars including Siu Leung Li, Darren William Davis, Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, Poshek Fu, Lisa Dombrowski and Peter Hitchcock began to pay attention to Stephen Chow. David Bordwell also updated his study of Hong Kong cinema, to include a discussion of *Shaolin Soccer*'s plot, style, and generic qualities.[37] The commercial success of this film not only stimulated a range of discussions among scholars and critics, it also resulted in the immediate attention and interest from various film industries at the international level. This included American-based film production and distribution company Miramax, who, according to Lisa Dombrowski,[38] instantly purchased the distribution rights of *Shaolin Soccer* and two of other Chow's box office hits, namely *God of Cookery* (dir. Lik-chi Lee and Stephen Chow, 1996) and *King of Comedy* (dir. Lik-chi Lee and Stephen Chow, 1999).

In regarding Stephen Chow as one of the figures who represent the trend of 'new localism' that emerged in the film industries of East Asia since the year 2000, Davis and Yeh have examined how Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* adopts specific subjects, genres and styles to intentionally only appeal to the local audience.[39] Lisa Dombrowski cites *Shaolin Soccer* as an example when examining the problems involved in the marketing strategies adopted by Miramax, who in order to expand their domination of the American mainstream market, distributed Asian films, specifically Hong Kong action genre films based on the thriving

reputation that Hong Kong action genre films have had in America since the end of the 1970s. Dombrowski has questioned Miramax's acquisition strategies for their lack of cultural specificity, and has asked to reconsider 'the relative value of cultural and aesthetic difference to distributors, audiences and filmmakers'.[40]

In an attempt to understand the cultural identity of contemporary China given the fact that it is subject to constant contestations between traditional national values and western modernisation, Siu Leung Li contemplates *Shaolin Soccer* as a film that, in his opinion, is a practical reference demonstrating how tradition (kung fu) negotiates with modernisation (CGI) and modernity ('the rise of the DVD/VCD mode of "film" consumption').[41] In a similar vein, Peter Hitchcock argues that *Shaolin Soccer* transcends geographical borders and cultural boundaries by combining the traditional cultural specificity (shaolin kung fu) with modern technology (digitalised special effects).[42] Most film scholars recognise the film as being representative of new transnational filmmaking practices, which are "nurtured" by the processes of globalisation and its consequences. The point will be returned to later when I discuss the production aspect of *Shaolin Soccer*.

Since the handover, Stephen Chow's films have consistently generated impressive box office revenues and continuously enjoyed top positions in the local box office receipts rankings. Films such as *All's Well, End's Well* (dir. Alfred Cheung Kin-ting, 1997), *Lawyer, Lawyer* (dir. Joe Ma, 1998) and *King of Comedy* (1999) were all received enthusiastically. The films that Chow made after 1997 continued to embody his *mo lei-tau* style: nonsensical dialogue, slapstick visual gags that often were vulgarly presented and his trademark cinematic play of spoofing many of the classics from both local and Hollywood cinema. At the same time, one can also witness a deliberate transition in Chow's comedy style, which became first evident in *King of Comedy*. Firstly, the film does not solely rely on nonsensical wordplay and lowbrow comic acts as did many of his previous films. Secondly, Chow exhibits a more in-depth acting style, while other characters in the film seem to be created with greater depth too. Thirdly, the film emphasises more melodramatic plot development and characterisation, which differs greatly from the unvarying lowbrow comic tendencies in his previous work.

This transition may be attributed to the greater creative freedom that he has enjoyed since forming his own production company Star Overseas in 1996. Compared to his pre-1997 filmmaking pattern, when he would make ten films a year[43] in order to comply with 'the industry's mode of production',[44] since 1997 Chow only produces one film every three to four years. However, the net result of focusing on quality instead of quantity has taken Chow from being a local phenomenon to a regional one, and eventually developing into a globally-acclaimed filmmaking virtuoso. The two films that did most to successfully propel Chow in this direction were *Shaolin Soccer* (2001) and *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004). For the next part of this chapter it is my intention to closely examine these two films in terms of their modes of production, distribution and exhibition. In so doing, I hope to identify the role of the 1997 political transition in Chow's post-1997 filmmaking trajectory, and shed light on the changes in Hong Kong cinema more generally.

The production of *Shaolin Soccer* (2001)

Shaolin Soccer took Stephen Chow two years to plan, prepare and shoot to completion. Such a length of time producing a commercial mainstream film was regarded by Davis and Yeh as 'unheard-of' at the time.[45] Journalist Bryan Walsh has claimed that Chow had 'an intention to capture the mass audience from the start'[46], and that by the time he began to work on *Soccer*, he had become concerned that the films he made previously were 'getting stale'[47] and so decided to make this film 'great'.[48] However, beyond Chow's own intentions and motivations, the film can perhaps also be read as an example of the resilience of the local film industry, which in order to compete with Hollywood-style mode of production, requiring a conscientious preproduction preparation, during which the script is well written and the budget is fully planned.

Regarded by Yam Chi-keung as 'the first film in which Chow takes full directorial responsibility',[49] *Soccer* certainly showcased Chow's cinematic inventiveness but also demonstrated his international aspirations, by choosing a narrative that focused on kung fu and also on the most popular sport worldwide, soccer/football, and then embedding both in

a highly dramatic comedy context. The theme of soccer/football had been portrayed by other Hong Kong directors in the comedy genre. Wong Jing, who had been a formative influence on Chow in becoming "the king of comedy", parodied the 1998 FIFA World Cup Final, in which Brazil lost 3-0 to the hosts France, in his 1999 gambling film *The Conmen in Vegas*. However, the theme of sport in the film is arguably never a central and predominant part of the story, and certainly does not involve the blending of martial arts/kung fu and comedy into sport.

Soccer portrays Sing (Chow) as a shaolin temple disciple who holds great store in the value of martial arts and has an ambition to repackage it so it can be popularised for people who live in a materialistic society and widely utilised by them in order to live a more struggle-free existence. Sing has no success in achieving this, but is later discovered by ex-soccer player Fung (Man Ta Ng) for his superior "Mighty Steel Leg". Fung used to be known respectfully as "golden right foot" for his talented football skills, but then he was bribed to deliberately miss a penalty in a game, which led to him becoming crippled at the hands of angry supporters who were manipulated by Fung's jealous teammate Hung (Patrick Tse Yin). Having convinced Sing and five of his comrades, who are also shaolin temple disciples, to form a football team called Shaolin, Fung decides to enter the China Super Cup tournament determined to win the trophy. Aided by the martial arts/kung fu skills of Sing and his comrades, Shaolin reaches the final, where they have to challenge the team Evil that is now run by Hung. Guided by strength, team spirit and extra help from Mui (Vicky Zhao Wei), who herself masters the martial arts technique Tai Chi Chuan, Shaolin eventually achieves victory even though the team suffers crucial injuries in confronting its adversaries.

The production of *Soccer* was firmly rooted within the local industry in that Chow's own company Star Overseas collaborated with Universe Entertainment to handle the film's production. Universe Entertainment is a local independent film production company that originally started in the business of video marketing but subsequently leaned more towards producing mainstream films to service the local audience. The company has developed significantly since 1997 by successfully producing and also distributing big budget feature

films like *Heroic Duo* (dir. Benny Chan, 2003), *The Detective* (dir. Oxide Pang Chun, 2007) and *Sparrow* (dir. Johnnie To, 2008). The film's cast and production crews were mainly locally employed with most of them being veterans of the local industry. The cast contained Chow's long term collaborator Man Ta Ng and established actor Patrick Tse, whose fame transcends the decades since the 1960s with countless popular TV dramas and classic films. Another of Chow's long-term collaborators Wong Yat-fei, who played one of the shaolin disciples in the film, is well known for his roles in hit TVB dramas. In the production crew, Chow's long-term partner Lik-chi Lee supervised the film's directing and production, and for the film's action choreography, Chow called in Ching Siu-tung to design the spectacular martial arts/kung fu scenes. Derek Elley refers in his review of *Soccer* to the experience possessed by Ching and his martial arts team, that enabled them to 'come up with an array of physical moves that mix in references to kung fu movies without losing sight of character'.[50]

Although martial arts/kung fu is the central theme to this film, Chow's intention to modernise this traditional genre through a repackaging of it in the form of CGI (Computer Generated Images) is fairly transparent. In fact a similar approach had previously been tried by the industry, perhaps with a determination to revive cinematic offerings in order to compete with computer generated Hollywood big budget features, and the strategy was commercially proven a success. Films like *The Storm Riders* (1998) and *A Man Called Hero* (1999) (both directed by Andrew Lau Wai-keung, see Chapter One) not only topped the box office chart, but also had a generally positive critical reception.[51] The CGI visual effects in *Soccer* were designed by Centro Digital Pictures, the same company responsible for the visual effects in *The Storm Riders* and *A Man Called Hero*. This postproduction company was established in 1987 and is reputed to be a pioneer in the production of digital visual effects for local feature films.[52] The intention of the company is to make films that adhere to the original Hong Kong style. At the same time, as Olivia Khoo has stated in an essay on contemporary Chinese blockbusters, they appeal to the local audience 'whose taste for effects has matured through exposure to effects-laden Hollywood films, video games and commercials'[53]. Digital fight scenes and computer generated visual effects of an international standard (according to David Bordwell Chow invested $5.7 million in the

digital visual effects design of the film to ensure this[54]) combined with popular sports games, were continuously intertwined with Chow's familiar *mo lei-tau* gags, thus both updating and revolutionising a locally familiar formulae.

Even with the apparent intent of promoting this film locally, Chow's underlying objective of attracting audiences outside Hong Kong is clearly evident, especially the lucrative audience in the Mainland. Firstly, the film centres on the character Sing and his five "shi xiong di"[55], who are Shaolin Temple disciples. Ever since *The Shaolin Temple* (dir. Chang Hsin-yen, 1982), arguably the first Hong Kong production to be released theatrically in Mainland China, received positive critical reviews and total acceptance by the local audience, Shaolin films have found favour with the Mainland market. For a film that has such a 'characteristically Hong Kong take on Chinese patriotism'[56], as Davis and Yeh observe '… Chow prided himself in exemplifying specifically Chinese forms of virtuosity, invoking not only Shaolin kung fu but also a home grown story…Shaolin Soccer moves the game forward, changing the Hong Kong reputation from shoddy colonial escapism to more affirmative Chinese values.'[57]

Soccer was mostly shot in Mainland China (Shanghai and Zhuhai), apart from the beginning and the end of the film, which were shot in Times Square in Hong Kong. The latter is a major shopping centre displaying a myriad of world-renowned brands that epitomise the western style of Hong Kong and has come to be regarded as one of its most popular tourist destinations, particularly for Mainlanders, once visiting Hong Kong became much easier after the 1997 handover. The film conveys that it was in Times Square where Chow's character, the Shaolin disciple Sing, first conceived his ambition to develop his martial arts/kung fu skills worldwide and make himself rich and famous. Consequently it is also in Times Square where we are made to realise that Sing's ambition has finally been fulfilled when we see the final shot of the film with Chow appearing on the cover of Time Magazine and witness the sight of ordinary people incorporating martial arts/kung fu skills into their daily lives. In this context Times Square works as the space where tradition and modernity can coexist. This filmic representation echoes reality where, despite the obvious conflict, as a result of particular effort Mainland China (tradition) and Hong Kong

(modernity) can be culturally and economically integrated.

In order to further 'increase the film's market potential on the Mainland',[58] Chow employed Mainland actress Vicky Zhao Wei to play the character Mui, a Mainland immigrant who uses her striking Tai Chi skill in cookery in a street food restaurant where she works as a chef. At the time, according to Davis and Yeh, Zhao was considered 'red-hot in the region'[59] due to the reception of the Taiwan-Mainland China coproduced costume drama series *Princess Pearl* (aka *My Fair Princess*:1998, 1999), in which Zhao starred as the film's eponymous heroine. The two series enjoyed phenomenal popularity in Mainland China and Taiwan and even penetrated beyond to outside regions like Singapore and Malaysia. One can easily understand why Chow chose Zhao to star in *Soccer* since not only does Zhao possess a major box-office appeal whether in the Mainland market or outside, she also fits in with the *mo lei-tau* comedy style and martial arts/kung fu choreography skills that *Soccer* requires. This is to a great extent due to the character Princess Pearl that Zhao successfully portrayed as an uneducated, mischievous orphan, who struggles to make a living by using her martial arts/kung fu skills. The mannerisms that Zhao uses to portray Princess Pearl are reminiscent of the character Wai Siu-bo, who Chow portrayed in the previously mentioned high-grossing costume comedy *Royal Tramp*. In fact, the quick-witted often fairly "*mo lei-tau*" persona that Zhao projected on to Princess Pearl saw her acclaimed by journalists as the "Mainland female version of Stephen Chow".

In *Soccer*, it is also possible to recognise a considerable degree of repetition in terms of characterisation and cross-referencing. For instance, Chow always portrays the underdog in society who eventually overcomes enormous difficulties through his determination, quick wittedness and even sometimes trickery. The female protagonists that Chow falls for are often grotesque figures (like Mui in *Soccer*, Sister Turkey in *Cookery* and Lau Piu-piu in *King of Comedy*); in terms of cross referencing, we can easily spot Chow's homage to his all-time hero Bruce Lee by his dressing the goalkeeper (Danny Chan Kwok-kwan, whose appearance closely resembles Bruce Lee) with the iconic yellow and black tracksuit that Bruce Lee wore in *Game of Death* (dir. Robert Clouse, 1978), and having him perform some of Bruce Lee's signature moves; we also observe when Mui goes to a beauty salon to

have a complete make-over in order to look attractive, she ends up looking like 'a cross between Anita Mui and Joey Wang in "A Chinese Ghost Story"'[60].

Incorporating the theme of food with martial arts/kung fu was extensively portrayed in Chow's 1996 film *God of Cookery*. However, changes can be found at a thematic level in *Soccer* to further indicate Chow's inclination to integrate this with Mainland tradition and culture. Firstly, and simplistically, the cuisine (for instance King's Fried Rice, Roast Goose, Beef Balls, Barbequed Pork on Rice) portrayed in *Cookery* are dishes that exclusively relate to Hong Kong food culture so that the film fully insists on its unique local identity. In contrast the chief food presented in *Soccer,* that Mui makes using her martial arts/kung fu skills, is Mantou a steamed bun that is a staple food of people living in northern parts of China. Secondly, in *Soccer,* when Sing first meets Mui, he is so overwhelmed by Mui's skills that he expresses his admiration towards Mui in song. The melody of this song is instantly recognisable to audiences from the Mainland as Chow "borrows" it from the Chinese classic musical *Third Sister Liu* (dir. Su Li, 1961) a film based on folklore that portrays the bravery and cleverness of the eponymous Third Sister Liu, the theme song of which has been repeatedly used and covered by many well-known directors and vocalists in Mainland China. Thirdly, Chow and Zhao's romance in the film is kept at a somewhat platonic level. Bordwell refers to it as 'in keeping with PRC strictures'[61], whilst others see it as representing 'a romantic attachment between Hong Kong popular culture and Mainland serenity'[62]. To conclude, it could be argued that the change of sovereignty, at least for *Shaolin Soccer*, encouraged Chow to embrace Chinese tradition and popular culture, and as a result recreate a cinematic representation that targets the tastes of the Mainland audience.

Chow's consciousness of cultivating the new market outside of Hong Kong and Mainland China is also clearly apparent during the planning of the production of *Soccer*. The film not only synthesises martial arts/kung fu with football/soccer (coinciding with the 2002 World Cup finals), it also, as Yam Chi-keung argues, contains a 'mix and match of popular appeals from…Japanese *anime* (animation films of uniquely Japanese style and content) and *manga* (Japanese comic books)…'[63] A considerable number of scholars and critics

have discussed Japan's global cultural influence that has developed rapidly since the 1990s, and especially the influence of Japanimation and computer games made in Japan.[64] Others, like Koichi Iwabuchi, more specifically debate the growing role of Japanese cultural forms in the transnational flow of media and popular culture.[65] The worldwide success of *Spirited Away*, a 2001 Japanese animated fantasy film, stimulated the demand for *Anime* films in film markets including Hong Kong, which in turn fuelled the success of *My Life as McDull* (dir. Toe Yuen, 2001), a feature-length animation that was uniquely constructed within Hong Kong's local culture, and at the same time also 'bears the hallmarks of an international animation culture'[66]. In *Soccer,* Chow fully anticipated this global acceptance of Japanimation, and also took into account the growing role that computer games play in modern everyday lives. The film presented *Captain Tubasa*-inspired[67] video game-style martial arts/kung fu choreographies and cartoonish visual effects, accompanied with highly entertaining *mo lei-tau* comedy that would indeed appeal to a worldwide audience.

In order to tailor the comic drama of the film to a wider range of audiences, Chow intentionally toned down the nonsensical verbal play that was deployed in his pre-1997 works and which is highly localised, replacing it with more visual comic effects that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. This has been discussed by a number of film scholars, including David Bordwell, who believes that the film 'relies almost entirely on sight gags, and the plot is unusually disciplined for a Hong Kong movie'[68]. Others disagree, for instance Yam Chi-keung who has suggested that: 'in the cast of *Shaolin Soccer*…as is typical of Stephen Chow's *moleitau* style, the characterizations are comically exaggerated and extreme, without any compromise with subtlety.'[69] Both of these views contain insightful revelations and in viewing the film, although we experience a reduction in the level of verbal humour, the film has by no means completely abandoned it. For instance, there is a scene in which Sing and his "shi xiong" (one of the six Shaolin disciples) dress up as monks and parody the song "California Dreamin'" with nonsensical lyrics about the wonderful nature of Shaolin, until the scene eventually descends into farcical slapstick reminiscent of the classic *mo lei-tau* style. Another example is in the street vendors' nonsensical talking, singing and dancing, which in turn degenerates into a farcical parody of the dancing in Michael Jackson's *Thriller* music video. There are numerous similar

scenes filled with idiotic dialogues, satirical jokes and parodies that might puzzle non-Cantonese-speaking audiences. Nevertheless, as a hybridised production, *Soccer* exhibits ample sources of entertainment for the international audience to embrace.

Distributing *Shaolin Soccer* (2001)

As discussed in Chapter One, under the policy of 'one country, two systems', the Hong Kong film industry still theoretically retains the same level of freedom and creativity as it had before the handover. However, due to the rapid decrease in overseas market revenues resulting from the financial crisis, the industry desperately needed to explore new market niches in order to revive its cinema. With the 1997 political transition, cultivating the market in Mainland China has become one of these possibilities. As argued earlier in the consideration of *Shaolin Soccer*'s production, we can clearly see Chow's intention to position the film in such a way that it targets the Mainland market, and yet the existence of the "two systems" proved that there were still obstacles. A small number of film scholars and critics have referred to some of the obstacles that *Soccer* encountered when planned for release on the Mainland, which mainly lay in vigorous censorship through the auspices of the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) institutes. Christina Klein suggests the reason the film was refused a theatrical release was because Chow failed to ask the authorities' permission to use the name of Shaolin Temple;[70] Bordwell propose that the film's title offended Buddhists in the Mainland therefore leading to it being banned from the Mainland;[71] the outcome according to the journalist Patrick Frater,[72] was that no compromise could be made on Chow's part or from SARFT, and for that reason *Soccer* failed to gain access to the Mainland market. The matter lends proof to the argument that because of 'one country, two systems', the entry of the Hong Kong film industry into the Mainland market can still be restricted in many respects (see Chapter One).

A similar attempt at reaching out to Mainland China had been made by Chow before the handover, with his 1995 parody film *Chinese Odyssey*. Consisting of two parts, *Pandora's Box* and *Cinderella*, the film presented a satire ridiculing *Journey to the West*, one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. Although the film may be regarded as

part of the canon of work that has 'added substance to the idea that there is a postmodernism unique to Hong Kong'[73], its Mainland film production collaborator, Xi'an Film Studio, believed the film to be a cultural waste and unrepresentative of the studio's standard in the pursuit of art.[74] Consequently, even though the film was permitted a release in the Mainland, it did not succeed in the theatrical market. Surprisingly, years later the film created quite a sensation among undergraduates in universities in Mainland China. Discussions mainly revolved around this film's style, themes and subtexts, especially the subtext of the scene in which we hear Chow's character's monologue confessing his true love. Perhaps *Chinese Odyssey*'s unexpected popularity in the Mainland encouraged Chow to modify this approach in order to prepare his future films so that they may be more easily embraced by the Mainland.

The distribution of *Soccer* in the United States did not go as well as Chow hoped, although Miramax, who purchased the film's copyright due to the film's impressive local box office revenue, handled the film's marketing campaign for its release in the American market. In her analysis of Miramax's acquisition and distribution strategies for commercial Chinese-language films in the mainstream American market, Lisa Dombrowski examines advantages and obstacles that the transnational film trade presents arising from the cultural and aesthetic differences.[75] As one of the examples that delineate Miramax's distribution strategies for Hong Kong action cinema, she draws a detailed sketch on Miramax's campaign for the release of *Shaolin Soccer*.[76] In her account Dombrowski claims that in aiming to appeal to family audiences, Miramax cut twenty-five minutes from the film's full-length Hong Kong version, which includes removing scenes from the opening sequence, reducing the role of the female lead and eliminating the comic scenes that are vital to the Chow's trademark *mo lei-tau* humor.[77] Dombrowski also documents that the new eighty-six minute version was dubbed with Chow providing his own voice, and digitally adding English signs and graphics into the mise-en-scène to make the locations more recognisable to the American audience;[78] she further notes that Miramax kept the film's original score, however, in the closing credits the clichéd 1970s disco hit "Kung Fu Fighting" was added for the purpose of aiding Western familiarity.[79]

Miramax also managed to add even more "drama" in their handling of *Soccer*'s theatrical distribution. It originally announced an April 2002 theatrical release at approximately 1,000 venues, but poor test screenings of the dubbed American version forced a series of changes in the release date.[80] With Miramax postponing *Soccer*'s theatrical release, it forbade any American DVD retailers selling the Hong Kong version of the film on imported discs.[81] In the meantime, Chow signed an agreement with Columbia Asia and Sony Pictures Classics to produce and distribute his *Kung Fu Hustle*, which as Dombrowski remarks, 'provid[ed] Miramax with even less incentive to promote *Shaolin Soccer*, lest the build-up generate a future audience for Sony'.[82]

Shaolin Soccer (2001)'s exhibition

Even though the film failed to access the world's largest and most profitable film market of Mainland China, millions of Mainlanders watched pirated versions of the film.[83] Although this obviously did not generate profit for Stephen Chow, it did provide a prelude for take up by this potential audience of his future releases *Kung Fu Hustle* and *CJ7*. *Soccer* was released in Hong Kong during the summer of 2001 and it stayed on screen for almost 3 months generating over HK$60 million in income and, as noted by Yam Chi-keung, breaking the box office record for local films.[84] In April 2004, the American version of *Shaolin Soccer* eventually opened on six U.S. screens, featuring all the previously made changes but sporting subtitles rather than the dubbed dialogue.[85] The film never played on more than fourteen screens at a time, and ended its twenty-one week run with a mere US$489,000 in income, accounting for only one percent of its overall worldwide gross.[86] Through video/DVD circulation, film festivals and television premieres, *Soccer* was able to be widely exhibited in Southeast Asia, South America and in the UK and most of Europe.[87]

Despite its respectable achievements, *Soccer*'s success was still somewhat limited to local/regional areas compared to his next film *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004), which became a truly global phenomenon. Therefore, as the next stage of this case study, I intend to provide a comprehensive examination of this locally, regionally and globally successful film in the context of its industrial production, exhibition and distribution. In so doing, it is my

objective to establish the full extent of the legacy that this local-turned-global film of Stephen Chow bequeaths to the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema.

Kung Fu Hustle (2004): a cross-border interaction between the Hong Kong, Mainland China and Hollywood film industries

> By the time Ang Lee and Zhang Yimou made their global films they already had well-established international reputations as makers of art films. Chow, in contrast, has long been a maker of commercial films for Hong Kong audiences and has thus been largely unknown to American audiences… With *Kung Fu Hustle*, Chow achieved the remarkable feat (for a director) of retaining his unapologetic commercial sensibility and bypassing the art film as he made his very successful move into the mainstream global market.[88]

In this statement Klein underscores the significance of *Kung Fu Hustle* for the Hong Kong film industry, particularly its massive acknowledgement from American audiences despite the fact of Chow being a distinctly non-art house director with no established reputation in America. However, *Kung Fu Hustle*'s global success should not have come as a total surprise. Through the film's merging of what Christina Klein has referred to as 'the diverse globalization strategies of three separate film industries: Hong Kong, Hollywood and Mainland China'[89], it was effectively planned to be a global success. However, what perhaps fails to be appreciated (at least by some of the scholars studying Hong Kong cinema) is how important a role the 1997 political reunion played in propelling the global success of this film and, furthermore, an understanding of the raison d'etre of "Asianisation" and "globalisation" and their facilitation of Chow's success with this global film.

The making of *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004): the Hong Kong side of the story

Set in 1930s Shanghai, *Hustle* presents a world where an assortment of gangsters has created a chaotic and disturbing environment. Among the various gangsters, the Axe Gang is the most feared by the citizens. Stephen Chow plays Sing, a complete loser, whose only ambition is to join the Axe Gang. One day, Sing and his friend Bone (Chi-chung Lam) impersonating members of the Axe Gang come to Pig Sty Alley, the poorest area in the city,

to exact payment for protection. Sing inadvertently manages to attract the real gang to the alley but the gangsters are defeated by the undercover martial arts masters who are the alley's tenants. Angered by his gang's defeat, Brother Sum (Kwok-kuen Chan) hires assassins to attack the alley at night. However, the assassination is averted by the intervention of the landlord of the alley (Yuen Wah) and his wife (Yuen Qiu) who both happen to be highly skillful martial arts masters as well. To kill the landlord and landlady, Brother Sum uses Sing's ability to rapidly pick locks to free the Beast, the Ultimate King of Killers (Bruce Leung Siu-lung) from a mental asylum with the Beast and the landlord and landlady subsequently engaging in a fierce battle. For refusing to assist Brother Sum and the Beast to kill the landlord and his wife, Sing is pulverised by the Beast but is brought back to the alley and nursed back to health by the landlord and his wife. Sing soon recovers under the treatment of Chinese medicine and realises his true potential as a kung fu genius. Later, Sing discovers the real spirit of the Buddhist Palm and defeats the Beast and the Axe Gang. The film ends in a romantic reunion when Sing and the mute ice cream vendor Fong (Shengyi Hung) meet each other outside the candy shop that Sing and Bone have opened.

Kung Fu Hustle adopts a similar plot formula be found in most of Chow's filmography: he portrays a very ordinary, underdog type of character, eventually becoming an extraordinary superhero, then living happily ever after with the female protagonist on who he secretly has a crush. The film presents us with a digital martial arts/kung fu *mo lei-tau* comedy that exhibits consistency of his trademark filmic techniques and is firmly rooted within local (Hong Kong) cinematic conventions and popular culture. Apart from following a similar plot device to his other films, another of Chow's familiar filmic techniques is in the construction of the characters. The character that Chow portrays in the film is called "Sing", the same name as the character in *Shaolin Soccer*, the name being chosen because it is from Chow's Chinese first name "Sing Chi". Srinivas infers that this choice is due to Chow's acute awareness of his own particular persona, which forms 'an important part of the pleasurable familiarity of the Chow vehicle'[90]. Playing himself in films has constituted an inevitable pattern that encourages the audience to recognise Chow's works ever since he made his first big impression on audiences with the character Chow Sing Cho that he portrays in the box office success *All for the Winner*. Like most of the characters that Chow

portrays, Sing in *Hustle* starts off, in the words of Stokes and Hoover, as an 'arrogant pipsqueak, who is a totally self-serving and uncompassionate smart-aleck'[91]; however, he proves that underneath it all he still has a heart of gold and when push comes to shove he will ultimately sacrifice his selfish interests and choose good over evil.[92] The female counterparts towards whom Chow's characters in the films feel affection generally possess some form of imperfection; they are either grotesque (Turkey in *The God of Cookery* and Mui in *Shaolin Soccer*) or have some form of disability (Fong the mute ice cream vendor in this film).

Self-referentiality and cinematic quotation, which is constantly deployed in Chow's filmmaking practice, is fully in evidence in *Hustle*, including Chow paying tribute to the history of Hong Kong cinema running from the 1950s to the 1980s: The housing arrangement of Pig Sty Alley, where the story of *Hustle* unfolds, is borrowed from the 1973 hit situation comedy *The House of 72 Tenants* (dir. Chor Yuen), produced by Shaw Brothers; the "Buddha Palm" martial arts skill that Chow's character Sing learns takes Hong Kong audiences back to the memories of the classic cult film *Buddha's Palm* (dir. Taylor Wong Tai-loi, 1982) and popular series *Buddha's Palm Strikes Again* (1993), made by TVB; The landlord and landlady refer to themselves as "Yang Guo" and "Xiao Long Nu", direct references to the characters from Jin Yong's *wu xia* novel *The Return of the Condor Heroes*, the in-joke being that they are nothing like as young and pretty as the characters in the novel.

Clear homage to international popular culture as is often seen in many of Chow's previous works, is also deployed in *Hustle*. For instance, the scene where Sing is chased by the Landlady as he flees from the Alley, as described by film critic Amy Biancolli, is homage to the characters in *Looney Tunes* Cartoons;[93] as Sing arrives at the door to the Beast's cell in the mental asylum, he hallucinates a large wave of blood rushing from the cell door, similar to a classic scene in *The Shining* (dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1980); Sing's appearance and choreographed moves in the film evokes the iconic Bruce Lee; and the final combat between Sing and hundreds of the Axe Gang members imitates the fight between Neo and hundreds of Agent Smiths in *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003).

Hustle's cinematography (by Hang-sang Poon, who also served as cinematographer in Chow's *Chinese Odyssey*) and choreography (designed by Sammo Hung Kam-bo and Yuen Woo-ping) reminds the viewers of the stylish Cantonese *wu xia* films made by Chang Che and King Hu. In addition, the casting of the film pays genuine tribute to the golden era of Hong Kong martial arts/kung fu cinema. We see many established martial arts/kung fu actors and actress like Yuen Qiu, Bruce Leung Siu-lung, Dong Zhi-hua (who played Donut) and Chiu Chi Ling (playing Tailor), most of whose careers appeared dormant for a long time before their appearances in this film. Christina Klein argues that the 'diversity of textual references that Chow makes in this film is a key part of his effort to effect the transition from a local to a global filmmaker'.[94]

The aesthetically more polished look of *Kung Fu Hustle* in comparison to many of Chow's earlier films can be attributed to the increased production budget that Chow managed to obtain from Huayi Brothers (the largest privately-owned media group in Mainland China) and Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia (the Hong Kong-based division of Sony Pictures Entertainment, a Hollywood studio owned by the Japanese media conglomerate, as noted by Klein[95]) and largely due to the success that *Shaolin Soccer* had generated locally. In Vivian P.Y. Lee's discussion of *Hustle*,[96] she suggests that the increase in the budget for this film results in 'more polished script and storyline, more expensive set designs, better postproduction work and more visually accomplished special effects'[97].

In terms of production strategy, *Kung Fu Hustle* also marked a transition to Chow's previous working patterns. According to Christina Klein, Chow originally presented Columbia Pictures with only a two-sentence synopsis of the film and believed that the film was ready to shoot;[98] such practice being considered the normal habit of filmmaking in the Hong Kong film industry at the time. By contrast, as Klein comments, this was considered unthinkable for the Hollywood production majors, where the producer, and not the director, takes the more active role in developing and shaping a story as it matures.[99] Klein notes that in eventually agreeing to restructure their ideas into a fully developed script, Chow and his screenwriters Kan-cheung Tsang (who served as co-screenwriters of *God of Cookery* and

Shaolin Soccer), Xin Huo and Man-keung Chan spent a year and a half drafting and revising the script with input from the producer at Columbia.[100] Columbia's input on *Hustle* injected Hollywoodised "quality control" into the film. It secured a gateway to transferring the film from being a mere localised product into a commodity with an international appeal that can more easily circulate in the global market.

The film was shot in Che Dun Movie Town in Shanghai,[101] in an attempt to capture the authenticity of 1930's Shanghai. However, Chow recruited all the crucial personnel (for example the co-producers, action directors and leading actors) from within the Hong Kong industry in order to determine the content of the film, the performances and the style of action. Chow spent more than three years making the film. Centro Digital Pictures, who designed *Soccer*'s CGI visual effects, handled the film's post-production, which included adding the visual effects and supplying the Avid (software) system for editing and the digital intermediate process.[102] The very high quality of this film's CGI effects, as observed by Klein, 'far surpasses those found in other recent Chinese-language films without Hollywood's participation.'[103]

Ever since the traditional overseas (especially Southeast Asian) markets that Hong Kong films relied on for their exportation started to shrink since the early 1990s, exploring Mainland China, a market with vast potential, has been one of the approaches that Hong Kong filmmakers have enthusiastically embraced, particularly after the 1997 political handover (see Chapter One). As previously argued in my introduction, one obvious benefit for the development of Hong Kong cinema resulting from the handover was that the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed in June 2003 and was later on implemented in January 2004. Under the implemented terms of the CEPA, the Mainland was made easier to access not only for Hong Kong's films, but also its videos, television programmes and cinematic infrastructure (see Introduction). More specifically on the aspect of film production, if films are Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions, they are exempt from the Mainland foreign film quota and will no longer have restricted access to the Mainland markets; these co-produced films do not need to be filmed completely in Mainland China and the stories of these co-produced films do not need to be China-related;

in addition, the ratio of Hong Kong workers in these co-productions can be up to 70% (see Introduction). These implemented terms confer great benefit to Hong Kong filmmakers in that they afford unfettered access to the Mainland market, however they do place certain constraints on the film's production including the requirement for it to be a true co-production between PRC and Hong Kong entities, and that it must employ a certain prescribed ratio (at least 30%) of PRC based personnel in the film's making. Consequently for *Kung Fu Hustle* to benefit under the aegis of CEPA it was necessary for Stephen Chow to collaborate with a PRC based film production company and to recruit locally based cast and crew members, this point will be returned to in a later section. Although Hong Kong filmmakers are challenged by the constraints presented by the implementation of CEPA, they are seemingly unable to resist the allure of the potentially huge revenues offered by the Mainland market and as a result, we have witnessed an increasing number of Hong Kong films released onto the local and the Mainland markets since 2004. These films were aided by resources, talents and funding from both lands, and were not only capable of flourishing in both lands' film markets, but also received positive critical acclaim. The list includes films like *New Police Story* (dir. Benny Chan, 2004), *2046* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2004), *Seven Swords* (dir. Hark Tsui, 2005) and *A Chinese Tall Story* (dir. Jeffrey Lau, 2005).

For *Kung Fu Hustle*, Stephen Chow's aim of gaining access to the Mainland market for the film was even more determined compared to his earlier *Shaolin Soccer*. Firstly, Chow collaborated with two major film companies in the Mainland, namely China Film Group, the largest state-run company, and Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment, the leading privately-owned company, in order to guarantee the film's access to the Mainland market (a detailed analysis regarding this point will be conducted later). Secondly, Mandarin dominates the dialogue in the film, compared to *Soccer*. We even hear the occasional amusing in-joke that plays on certain dialects of Mandarin to create *mo lei-tau* humor. For instance, the scene in which Sing comes to Pig Sty Alley to exact payment from the tenants for protection. The tenants refuse to pay and therefore Sing has to challenge them in order to teach them a lesson. Insisting on having a one-on-one fight, Sing picks an opponent who can most likely be easily dealt with. First he picks a middle-aged woman thinking she must be an easy target and because of which he even allows her to hit him first. Unexpectedly he

is badly injured by the woman's punch to the belly. Dazed by this unexpected result, Sing asks the woman what she does, to which the woman replies in a suspiciously Henan dialect[104]: "I am a farmer." Feeling even more confused when Sing hears that the woman is only a farmer he rejoins with: "Farmers can never fight like this." To which the woman replies: "You have issues." The Henan dialect in the scene lends to the the comic effect and so it registers as a linguistic verbal play that helps to maintain Chow's trademark mo *lei-tau* style in the film.

Thirdly, basing *Hustle*'s narrative on the film *The House of 72 Tenants* does not appear to be a random selection but rather a calculated strategy determined to win favour in both Hong Kong's and Mainland China's markets. According to Gary Xu's discussion of the subject,[105] Chor Yuen's *72 Tenants* is not an original creation. It is a remake of Mainland film director Wang Weiyi's 1963 film *72 Tenant Families*,[106] a comedy set in Guangzhou that centres on a police officer who constantly extorts the 72 tenants. In turn, Wang Weiyi's film itself is not an original creation either, but based on a popular Shanghai play from the 1940s that is located in a typical Shanghai Shikumen housing complex.[107] After thoroughly analysing the Shanghai play's narrative and its ideological motif, followed by his reading of the meaningful impact that Chor's remake has to Hong Kong cinema, Xu points out the resemblance that Chow's *Hustle* shares with Chor Yuen's film and the Shanghai play.[108] Being densely engaged in the textual and cinematic sources of both lands' local popular culture clearly demonstrates Chow's keen ambition to satisfy the audiences' tastes on both sides.

It appears that Chow's calculated strategy for this film of local sensibilities mixed with international popular culture, both of which perfectly co-inhabit a fantasised comic action shell, pays off. Apart from being well-received by the local critics, *Hustle* successfully generated an attractive proposition for the local audience. As observed by Yam Chi-keung,[109] within its first three weeks on screen during the Christmas period of 2004 to 2005, the film broke local box office records of over HK$60 million previously held by *Shaolin Soccer*. The net result was that *Hustle* topped the 2004 local box office ranking and again outperformed Hollywood productions that were released at the same time, for instance *The*

Day after Tomorrow, *Harry Porter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*; even veteran Jackie Chan's returning film *New Police Story* could not compete with the film's box office performance.[110] In addition, its highest accolade was that Chow's ingenious directing skills for the film brought him his second award for Best Director at the 2005 Taiwan's Golden Horse Film Festival, following that for *Shaolin Soccer*. However, this was not the end of the film's remarkable achievements and as such we need to take a closer look at how Chow "conquered" the market of Mainland China.

The Mainland China side of the story

It is clear that globalisation has accelerated cross-border flows of capital and labour. In response to the increasing challenge of a globalised economic environment, Mainland China has gone through dramatic changes. The outcome of these changes accelerated China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in 1999, which left the Chinese government with no choice other than to reform its state-owned industries and to modernise its policies and accordingly the film industry has changed dramatically. As a result, increasing numbers of privately-owned film production companies have been encouraged to compete in the global market out of necessity. A considerable number of film scholars have noted the changes in the industry and asserted that with the ongoing development of its film industry and the potential for exploitation of its vast audience, China could in Michael Curtin's view 'shake the very foundations of Hollywood's century-long hegemony'.[111]

As discussed earlier, since the political transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty and the launch of CEPA, which aims to encourage the integration of China and Hong Kong, the number of China-Hong Kong co-productions has been continuously increasing (see also Chapter One). At this stage, Chow possibly realised that in order for *Kung Fu Hustle* to gain unrestricted access to the potentially profitable Mainland market, he needed to comply with the rules required by the implemented terms of CEPA. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, Chow needed to find PRC-based film production companies to co-produce the film and he also needed to recruit at least 30% of PRC based personnel in the film's making.

The end result was that Chow successfully approached two of the most prestigious media production corporations in Mainland China, namely China Film Group and Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment. The true value of such collaboration lies in the fact that not only did it comply with the requirements of the implemented CEPA, the two Mainland film groups also acted as the eyes of Mainland censorship in order to guarantee *Hustle*'s even easier accessibility to the Mainland market. In addition, these two film groups also provided the shooting locations and labour force, [112] which perhaps not only helped Chow to easily meet the ratio of 30% PRC based personnel, but also allowed Chow to better control the film's budget. According to Klein's discussion in her article '*Kung Fu Hustle*: Transnational Production and the Global Chinese-language Film' [113], *Hustle* only received 5 percent of its budget from China Film Group and Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment. To a certain extent, this probably guaranteed Chow the freedom to continue exercising in his usual "norm" when making this film, it perhaps also secured the support that *Hustle* needed from these two film groups when it came to the film's distribution in the Mainland. Klein also gives a very detailed description of how the film helped to sidestep the rigorous censorship in Mainland China, using methods that were mainly rooted in the careful construction of the film's content. For instance, the film is deliberately set in a loosely defined time and place; however, for Christina Klein the time line is clearly suggested as being set before the 1949 Communist revolution, given that the plot of the film involves scenes portraying police corruption, organised crime and rampant urban violence.[114]

As discussed earlier, Chow's *mo lei-tau* style of humor had already been embraced by Mainland university undergraduates with his postmodern pastiche *Chinese Odyssey*, and as discussed earlier, although *Shaolin Soccer* was never officially released in the Mainland, millions of curious Mainlanders had watched pirated versions of the film, to the extent that even before *Hustle* was theatrically released, its audience was already secured. *Hustle* was released in the Mainland during the Christmas period of 2004 to 2005.[115] Generating US$20 million box office revenue, *Hustle* became the year's second highest-grossing film released in the Mainland market. According to Klein's study, the film accounted for up to 58 percent of Mainland film industry revenue, which consequently elevated the production value of the Chinese film industry to become the third-largest film producing industry in

the world, after India and Hollywood.[116] The reviews of the film from Mainland film critics indicate an appreciation of Chow's directing skills in combining the old traditions of kung fu/martial arts films with modern digital visual effects, interspersed with his trademark humorous *mo lei-tau* dialogues, and a consideration of the film as being a representative example of Chinese-language filmmaking.[117] However, we need to move our perspective of the film to the Western side in order to construe how Chow managed to make *Hustle* into 'the top-grossing foreign-language film of 2005 in the United States.'[118]

The Hollywood side of the story

Although Hollywood still remains a dominant force in the global film market, many East Asian film industries centred in Hong Kong since the 1990s have emerged to expand their markets through Hollywood. This tendency has been looked into by several scholars such as Huaiting Wu and Joseph Man Chan with some regarding it as a case of reverse flow in pointing out the significance that the traditional culture flowing out of Asia and into the West has had locally and globally;[119] some like Gary Xu specifically examine the trend of remaking East Asia box office hits in Hollywood and conclude that it is a way by which Hollywood attempts to erase the East Asian identity and devalue the significant contribution that East Asian film industries have made to the global cinema in order to regain the dominant supremacy it previously had in global film markets.[120]

Gary Xu's observation of 'Hollywood's way of outsourcing'[121] also applies to the strategy of what Klein describes as 'global localization, or glocalization'[122]. This strategy enables Hollywood to focus energy on the making of local-language films through co-productions with non-American companies. As Klein's documents, these local-language films are financed with Hollywood money and overseen by Hollywood producers, and are mostly made outside the United States using the creative resources of a non-US film industry aiming at that industry's local market.[123] All of these operations point to the growing status of "Asianisation" within international film productions. Another aspect of this "Asianisation" has been the exodus of Hong Kong film talent to Hollywood, for instance John Woo, Chow Yun-fat, Michelle Yeoh and Jackie Chan. However, arguably only John

Woo and Jackie Chan can lay claim to have achieved a real breakthrough into Hollywood. Earning high international box office revenues and positive critical reviews with *Face Off* (1997), John Woo was encouraged to base his filmmaking career mainly in America. Subsequently Woo made several big budget features such as *Mission Impossible II* (2000), *Windtalkers* (2002) and *Paycheck* (2003), although not all of them were acclaimed as commercial and critical successes; however they are all virtually Hollywood productions. Jackie Chan is probably the most familiar and popular action icon to the American audience after Bruce Lee, ever since his *Rumble in the Bronx* (dir. Stanley Tong, 1994) became a huge hit in the US. The successes that John Woo's heroic blood shedding gunplay and Jackie Chan's slapstick stunt-filled action comedy achieved among the American audience presented Stephen Chow with model examples of action films to contemplate. However this is not to deny the inspiration that the success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) and Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) would also have had upon Chow in encouraging him to carry on with the generic method that he deployed so well in *Shaolin Soccer*, namely blending kung fu/martial arts with the imaginative CGI visual effects and animation, finished off with Chow's trademark *mo lei-tau* comedy spirit.

Interestingly, it was Columbia Asia who successfully distributed *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in the global film market. Klein notes that Columbia Asia was founded by Sony Pictures in 1998 with the purpose of making Chinese-language films for the East Asian market, and it soon established itself as the most successful of Hollywood's local-language enterprises.[124] Drawn by Stephen Chow's proven enormous commercial value, Columbia financed 95 percent of the US$20 million production budget of *Kung Fu Hustle*.[125] Not only was Columbia closely involved in *Hustle*'s screen writing progress, it also oversaw the process of the film's shooting and post-production. The end result is, in Klein's estimation, that the plot of *Hustle* exhibits 'a Hollywood level of consistency and integration that is absent from Chow's earlier films',[126] and the visual effects achieved in the film 'distinguishes a Hollywood studio production from a typically somewhat rougher Hong Kong film'.[127] However, Chow's *mo lei-tau* legacy is still largely prevalent in the film.

Columbia also took charge of worldwide marketing and distribution of the film.[128] After its

world premiere at the 2004 Toronto International Film Festival, it was subsequently released in China, Hong Kong and other countries in Asia in December 2004. The film was first shown in the United States at the Sundance Film Festival in January 2005, and then opened on general release on 22 April 2005 in edited form, after being shown in Los Angeles and New York for two weeks. It was then released to most of Europe in June 2005.[129] Later, the film was distributed on DVD and circulated globally. It generated US$17,108,591 in 129 days in the United States, which included the limited two-week theatrical run in New York City and Los Angeles. Following its wider release across North America, the worldwide gross of the film totaled US$101,004,669.[130] *Hustle* was also well received by the Western critics who mainly praised the film's comic aspects and action visual effects.[131] Before concluding this case study, it is worth taking a brief look at the film that arguably signals the transition of Chow's filmmaking style.

***CJ7* (2008)**

Following the global success of *Kung Fu Hustle*, Stephen Chow decided to expand his oeuvre still further by turning his back on the usual *mo lei-tau* comic act upon which he famously built his reputation and experimenting in the family genre of filmmaking, presumably with the purpose of appealing to a wider variety of audience groups. Chow's melodramatic feature, the fantasy/sci-fi family entertainment *CJ7* (2008), intended to pay homage to Stephen Spielberg's 1982 classic *E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, was released during the peak public holidays in Mainland China and Hong Kong. According to Vivian P.Y. Lee's study, it immediately climbed to pole position in the box office rankings in both lands.[132] The film takes the computer generated image-saturated visual effects *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle* to even greater heights in order to present the audience with a highly fantastic adventurous world where an eight year old boy, Dicky (Xu Jiao) meets an Alien, mistakenly left behind by a UFO, and later named CJ7.

Employing his usual screen writing collaborators Vincent Kok and Sandy Shaw, *CJ7*'s story surprisingly exhibits even more of a strengthened social and cultural integration with Mainland China. Firstly, the story is set in the Zhejiang Province of Mainland China (the

location of Stephen Chow's ancestral home). This fact is conveyed by a Rolls Royce's number plate shown in the opening sequence of the film. Secondly, the film's title salutes Mainland China's successful space missions, with the launches of human spaceflights Shenzhou 5 (2003) and Shenzhou 6 (2005). Thirdly, the film's primary language is Mandarin. Fourth, the story touches upon a current social trend that has developed in Mainland China since it transitioned from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy. This trend is for the majority of Chinese parents to instill in their children a concept of being successful which dictates that the only way of attaining success is to become superstars or CEOs in their adulthood. It is also perceived that education is vital in order to become "successful". As a result, many parents send their children to elite schools and universities despite the financially crippling high tuition fees that these schools and universities charge. Fifth, regardless of the continuous portrayals in the film that serve to criticise the huge gap between the rich and the poor in contemporary Mainland China, the story endorses traditional Chinese values such as diligence, thrift, plain living, hard work and a willingness to sacrifice and emphasises their importance in the economy-dominated Chinese society. As Vivian P.Y. Lee succinctly puts it: '…*CJ7* seems to resonate more with the melodramatic moralizing ethos of Mainland Chinese films than with the irreverent, flamboyant Hong Kong comic cinema that Chow has come to present.'[133]

The production of *CJ7* again shows the quality attainable as a result of cross-border collaboration. With generous financial support from the US (Columbia Asia) and Mainland China (China Film Group), Chow was able to carefully structure the film's storyline with his usual crew of screenwriters, taking his time to 'audition children all over China'[134] until he found the right one to play his son Dicky, and to employ Menfond Electronic Art & Computer Design in order to meet the film's requirement for more demanding CGI effects that would be able to compete on a par with Spielberg's *E.T.*. Menfond Electronic Art & Computer Design is a Hong Kong-based visual design company formed in 1990 that rapidly became a leading company providing high quality digital visual effects and 3D computer animation. The company's production *Master Q 2001* (dir. Herman Yau, 2001), is considered to have made history as the first Asian 3D animation film.[135]

Even with Stephen Chow's apparent "evacuation" from centre stage, leaving just the new comer, 9 year old Mainlander Xu Jiao, and a computer designed green orb (the Alien CJ7) to dominate the development of the narrative, the film's sci-fi motif, entertaining CGI slapstick and the melodramatic touching end to the film all managed to attract very respectable audience attendances in Hong Kong and Mainland China, grossing US$6.64 million in Hong Kong[136]and RMB$200 million in the Mainland (roughly US$25 million)[137]. However, the film's box office receipts in the US were miniscule when compared with those achieved by *Kung Fu Hustle,* with the film attracting just over US$50 million internationally[138] and yet it still generated a considerable profit when it is considered that the film's budget was only an estimated US$20 million.[139]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to chart Stephen Chow's pre- and post-1997 filmmaking trajectory. By delineating the development of Chow's career, we can trace a transition from a purely local phenomenon to eventually becoming a successful global filmmaking auteur. Chow's unique *mo lei-tau* style has done much to help lead Hong Kong comedy genre films towards their recent fruition. This has mainly resulted from the fact that Chow has not only guided the genre into its fullest cinematic expression, but he has also brought innovation and invention to the genre's filmic techniques. In addition, Chow's *mo lei-tau* films have developed into a form of Hong Kong culture, representing Hong Kong's sensibilities. Furthermore, a certain number of Chow's films that blend aesthetic elements of art house cinema (for instance, *Chinese Odyssey*) with his *mo lei-tau* genre would certainly appear to exempt him from being labeled a maker of 'merely frivolous non-sensical comedies which have no value beyond that of pure entertainment'[140]. Having said that, since *Shaolin Soccer,* Chow clearly has tailored his "localness" into greater "globalness". The global distribution of *Shaolin Soccer*, *Kung Fu Hustle* and *CJ7*, and enthusiastic responses from worldwide audiences received by these films, prove that Chow has succeeded. As discussed, the opportunities afforded by the 1997 political transition, the Asianisation trend and globalising pressures have all played significant roles in making Chow's global popularity happen.

Chow's success demonstrates the vitality of Hong Kong cinema. Since the 1990s, over forty of Chow's films have been released. These films generated an incomparable commercial return for the Hong Kong film industry of HK$1124 million in total.[141] Even during the downturn in the industry, Chow's films still retained enormous box office appeal. The dominant share of the film market enjoyed by Chow's films proves the continuing viability and influential contribution of his films. Chow's post-1997 films allow us to see how local and global cultural forms can flow and symbiotically coexist. They offer classic examples of how localness can succeed globally by absorbing the essences of other conventions of style, modes of production and marketing, actively engaging with Hollywood and becoming integrated into the global capitalist economy. At the time of writing this chapter, it has been rumored that Chow is preparing to cast Hollywood A-list stars Anne Hathaway and Jack Black in a remake of Bruce Lee's directorial debut *Way of the Dragon* (1972). To conclude I would like to quote Vivian P.Y. Lee: 'One can only wait and see how far Chow can take his cinephilia as he navigates the uncharted waters of global cinema in the years to come'.[142]

Notes

[1] S.V. Srinivas, '*Ku Fu Hustle*: A Note on the Local', in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2005, p. 290.
[2] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), pp. 246-248.
[3] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema*, p. 247.
[4] Leung Wing-fai, '*Infernal Affairs* and *Kung Fu Hustle*: Panacea, Placebo and Hong Kong Cinema', in Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-fai (eds.), *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2008), p. 80.
[5] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 247.
[6] Leung Wing-fai, '*Infernal Affairs* and *Kung Fu Hustle*: Panacea, Placebo and Hong Kong Cinema', in Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-fai (eds.), *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2008), p. 80.
[7] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 248.
[8] The data were collected from Hong Kong Film Services Office; Even Jackie Chan's *Gorgeous* (dir. Vincent Kok, 1999) and Wong Jing's *The Con Man in Las Vegas* (dir. Wong Jing, 1999) cannot compete with Chow's box office appeal at the time. *Gorgeous* grossed HK $27million box office receipts and *The Con Man* only grossed HK $18 million.
[9] The data was collected from IMDB websites: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0286112/releaseinfo; http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0373074/releaseinfo; http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0940709/releaseinfo, accessed 11 January 2011.
[10] For these three films, only *Shaolin Soccer* was not able to be released theatrically in Mainland China. However, the film broke Hong Kong Box Office records with HK$60 million and later Miramax purchased its US rights for US$10 million, see Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen*

Industries (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), pp. 39-42.
[11] The data were collected from Hong Kong Film Services Office.
[12] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 264.
[13] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and The Art of Entertainment* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 171-177.
[14] S.V. Srinivas, 'Ku Fu Hustle: A Note on the Local', in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2005, p. 289.
[15] See Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 247; see also Bryan Chang, 'Precursor of *Mo lei-tau*', in Keith Chan and Cheuk-to Li (eds.), *Eric Tsang, Filmmaker in Focus* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Press, 2008), p. 89; see also Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 265.
[16] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 260-270.
[17] Zhonghua Book Company published this dictionary in 2009. It is a dictionary on the meaning and use of new words that have appeared in China since the computer and the internet have been popularised in China over the last thirty years.
[18] Bryan Chang, 'Precursor of *Mo lei-tau*', in Keith Chan and Cheuk-to Li (eds.), *Eric Tsang, Filmmaker in Focus* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong International Film Festival Society Press, 2008), p. 89.
[19] Bryan Chang, 'Precursor of *Mo lei-tau*', p. 89.
[20] Bryan Chang, 'Precursor of *Mo lei-tau*', pp. 89- 90.
[21] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 41.
[22] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, p. 44.
[23] James Kung and Yueai Zhang, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Television in the 1970s: A Perspective', in Cheuk-to Li (ed.), *A Study of Hong Kong Cinema in the Seventies* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1984), pp. 14-17.
[24] Weichuan Sun, 'Important Filmmakers and Their Works', in Jianyong Zhang (ed.), *Contemporary Hong Kong and Taiwan Cinema Studies* (Beijing: Chinese Cinema Press, 2004), pp. 94-101.
[25] Bun is one of the selections from dim sum, a traditional cuisine involving many small individual portions of food that many Hong Kongers will enjoy at weekends.
[26] Yonggong Shi and Qiongxiong Liu, *Screen Image of Stephen Chow* (Beijing: Author Press, 2006), p. 126.
[27] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 48.
[28] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, p. 48.
[29] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience*, pp. 48-67.
[30] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 52.
[31] A film production company that was established by actor-turned-producer Charles Hung and his brother Jimmy Heung in 1990, allegedly claimed to be associated with the triads. The company later became a subsidiary of China Star Entertainment in 1999.
[32] See Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 48-67; see also Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 52-53.
[33] Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 60; I believe Curtin refers here to 'the studio era' as the era when Shaw Brothers film empire still dominated the industry.
[34] For instance Chow starred in ten films in 1990, all shot and completed in just one year's time; other films like *All's Well, End's Well* took only 13 days to shoot.
[35] *Justice, My Foot* grossed nearly 50 million dollars. *Royal Tramp* released in two parts, which generated nearly 70 million. *The Flirting Scholar* took in 40 million. *From Beijing with Love* nearly 38 million, as did *Sixty Million Dollar Man*, and *God of Cookery* took in nearly 41 million.
[36] See Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), pp. 246-248; see also S.V. Srinivas, 'Ku Fu Hustle: A Note on the Local', in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2005, pp. 290-294; see also Audrey Yue, 'Preposterous Hong Kong Horror: *Rouge*'s (Be) Hindsight and A (Sodomitical) Chinese Ghost Story', in Ken Gelder (ed.), *The Horror Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 370; see also Cui, Mengyang, *Hong Kong Cinema and the 1997 Return of the Colony to*

Mainland China: The Tensions and the Consequences (Australia: Universal-Publishers, 2007), pp. 28-29.
[37] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011.
[38] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment: Creating a Model for Crossover Hits', in *Scope*, February, 2008, http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=10&id=988&section=article&q=miramax, accessed 14 March 2011.
[39] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), pp. 38-43.
[40] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment: Creating a Model for Crossover Hits', in *Scope*, Issue 10, February 2008, http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=10&id=988, accessed 13 August 2008.
[41] Siu Leung Li, 'The Myth Continues: Cinematic Kung Fu in Modernity', in Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu (eds.), *Hong Kong Connections Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 53-57.
[42] Peter Hitchcock, 'Niche Cinema, or, *Kill Bill* with *Shaolin Soccer*', in Gina Marchetti and Tan See Kam (eds.), *Hong Kong Film, Hollywood and the New Global Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 221-224.
[43] Chow starred in at least 10 films in 1990: *My Hero*, *When Fortune Smiles*, *Love is Love*, *Look Out Officer*, *Lung Fung Restaurant*, *Legend of the Dragon*, *Triad Story*, *Curry and Pepper*, *Sleazy Dizzy* and *All for the Winner*.
[44] Christina Klein, '*Kung Fu Hustle*: Transnational Production and the Global Chinese-language Film', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2007, p. 192.
[45] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 40.
[46] Bryan Walsh, 'Stephen Chow the Star of *Shaolin Soccer* doesn't Mind if the Joke is on Him', in *Time Asia*, http://www.time.com/time/asia/2003/heroes/steven_chow.html, accessed May 18 2005.
[47] Bryan Walsh, 'Stephen Chow the Star of *Shaolin Soccer*'.
[48] Bryan Walsh, 'Stephen Chow the Star of *Shaolin Soccer*'.
[49] Yam Chi-keung, 'A Secular Gospel for the Marginal: Two Films of Stephen Chow as Hong Kong Cinematic Parables', in Christopher Deacy and Elisabeth Arweck (eds.), *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 204.
[50] Derek Elley, '*Shaolin Soccer*', in *Variety*, vol. 384, issue 8, October 8 2001, p. 63.
[51] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire Hong Kong Cinema* (London and New York: Verso, 1999), pp. 299-300; see also Olivia Khoo, 'Remaking the Past, Interrupting the Present: The Spaces of Technology and Futurity in Contemporary Chinese Blockbusters', in Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger (eds.), *Future of Chinese Cinemas: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 253.
[52] http://www.centro-media.com.hk/centro.htm#/dps/film/, accessed 15 March 2011.
[53] Olivia Khoo, 'Remaking the Past, Interrupting the Present: The Spaces of Technology and Futurity in Contemporary Chinese Blockbusters', in Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger (eds.), *Future of Chinese Cinemas: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 253.
[54] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 218.
[55] This is a traditional Chinese term that refers to the relationship that disciples have with one another. The term is usually used to describe disciples under the same master. It literally means brothers in apprenticeship.
[56] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 41.
[57] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 42.
[58] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 197.
[59] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 41.
[60] Derek Elley, '*Shaolin Soccer*', in *Variety*, vol. 384, issue 8, October 8 2001, p. 63.
[61] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 216.

[62] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 41.
[63] Yam Chi-keung, 'A Secular Gospel for the Marginal: Two Films of Stephen Chow as Hong Kong Cinematic Parables', in Christopher Deacy and Elisabeth Arweck (eds.), *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 205.
[64] See Tony Elger and Chris Smith, *Global Japanization: The Transnational Transformation of the Labour Process* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); see also Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television and Video Games*(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); see also Barry Wilkinson and Nick Oliver, *The Japanization of British Industry: New Developments in the 1990s*(Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
[65] Koichi Iwabuchi, 'How Japan is Pokémon?', in Joseph Jay Tobin (ed.), *Pikachu's Global Adventure: The Rise and Fall of Pokémon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 53-74.
[66] Jonathan Clements, *Schoolgirls Milky Crisis: Adventures in the Anime and Manga Trade* (Houston: A-Net Digital LLC, 2010), p. 142.
[67] In an interview, Chow admitted that Shaolin Soccer was inspired by a popular Japanese animated TV series *Captain Tsubasa* (1983-1986), http://www.animenewsnetwork.co.uk/news/2003-06-17/anime-inspired-shaolin-soccer, accessed 15 March 2011.
[68] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 217.
[69] Yam Chi-keung, 'A Secular Gospel for the Marginal: Two Films of Stephen Chow as Hong Kong Cinematic Parables', in Christopher Deacy and Elisabeth Arweck (eds.), *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), p. 205.
[70] Christina Klein, '*Kung Fu Hustle*: Transnational Production and the Global Chinese-language Film', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2007, p. 193.
[71] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 220.
[72] Patrick Frater, 'China Threatens Red Card for Chow's Soccer hit', in *Screen Daily*, http://www.screendaily.com/china-threatens-red-card-for-chows-soccer-hit/406470.article, accessed 16 March 2011.
[73] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 248.
[74] Yue Zhang, 'The World That is Deconstructed by *A Chinese Odyssey*', in *The Beijing News*, http://culture.thebeijingnews.com/0820/2005/11-02/013@093100.htm, accessed 11 August 2008.
[75] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment', in *Scope*, Issue 10, February 2008, http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/article.php?issue=10&id=988, accessed 13 August 2008.
[76] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[77] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[78] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[79] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[80] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[81] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
[82] Lisa Dombrowski, 'Miramax's Asian Experiment'.
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Chapter Three: Wong Kar-wai's Journey to the West

In the previous chapter, I compared Stephen Chow's films post-1997 era with those he made pre-1997 and demonstrated how his career had been transformed from being a purely local phenomenon to becoming a global auteur, I also discussed to what extent 1997 had an effect on Chow's manner of film production, as well as on patterns of distribution and exhibition. This chapter is similarly focused on the acclaimed auteur Wong Kar-wai. The reason for choosing Wong as a case study is that he represents in many respects a very different filmmaker than Chow, yet at the same time he is equally representative for the changes that have occurred in the development of Hong Kong cinema over the past two decades. From the outset of his career Wong has been a filmmaker who has achieved international recognition for his idiosyncratic filmic style. Whereas the appeal of Chow's films is overall due to his engagement with local and familiar forms of low culture, language, humour and genres, Wong's films are more commonly associated with high art and with a form of filmmaking that requires actively engaged viewers who appreciate complex narratives and unconventional visual characteristics. Writing for the British film magazine *Sight and Sound* in the mid-1990s, critic Larry Gross summarised how spectators are meant to respond to Wong's films:

> The first time you see Wong Kar-wai's movies, you feel you are watching the work of a delicious visual mannerist indifferent to narrative structure...The sheer hedonistic absorption in architectural surfaces, in light sources, in decor of every possible fabric and material, and the absence of overtly literary seriousness in the plots, make you feel trapped in the world of a super-talented hack. Then you go back and take another look, and the movies change, more drastically than any I know of. They seem richer, more intricately organized, more serious...[1]

Scholar Wimal Dissanayake has echoed Gross's evaluation that Wong's films demand close attention by stating that they 'need time for reconfiguration and time for reflection'.[2] At the same time, Dissanayake rejects the idea of seeing Wong exclusively as a 'difficult' art house auteur, asserting that he 'discourages ready-made categories and pigeon-holes into which his films might be quickly inserted'.[3] Peter Brunette agrees with this assessment,

arguing that especially in Wong's earlier films there is no clear distinction between art and genre.[4]

Most scholarly studies of Wong's work have focused on analysing his filmic techniques, narratives and themes, and on discussing his films' use of cinematography that, according to Robert Payne, 'so often works against the conventional principle of visual "seamlessness"'.[5] Less frequently one finds discussions regarding the popular cinema conventions that Wong's films have drawn on. Especially his earlier films, such as *As Tears Go By* (1988), *Ashes of Times* (1994) and *Fallen Angels* (1995), deployed popular Hong Kong mainstream genres such as triads, gangsters and martial arts films, crime drama and romantic comedy. In addition, since the beginning of his filmmaking career Wong has consistently employed well-established local stars, such as Maggie Cheung, Tony Leung, Leslie Cheung, Andy Lau and Faye Wong. Hence over the course of this chapter, I shall be paying careful attention to the way in which Wong's career transcends and crosses the boundaries between popular, mainstream genre films on the one hand and art house cinema on the other, and how perceptions of him as a filmmaker shift between different locations within an increasingly global film market. Studying Wong's trajectory from the early beginnings of his filmmaking in the late 1980s to his more recent productions allows me to reflect at a more general level on the effects of the 1997 political handover on Hong Kong's media landscape, and on increasing trends towards globalised production practices. To this end I shall focus in this chapter on discussing and analysing the production, distribution and exhibition patterns of Wong's films.

Before I look into his films in more detail, it is important to position Wong through a brief introduction of his background. Similar to Stephen Chow, Wong's career also began in television. After graduating from college Wong entered the production designers and directors course run by TVB. The course provided the foundation for Wong to establish his directorial skills, and the job of being a TV scriptwriter in his spare time helped him to become familiar with Hong Kong's localities and popular culture. Often offering different ideas and perspectives during production meetings, Wong's talent became noticed by producers, including Patrick Tam. Tam is a prominent Hong Kong film director, noted for

his New Wave films in the 1970s and 1980s. Like most of the New Wave filmmakers, Tam started his career in TV. His best television work *Seven Women* (1976) was noted for its controversial approach to sex and portrayal of prevailing middle-class values, which, as Law Kar argues, challenged the censorship limits that were current at the time.[6] His cinematic directorial debut *The Sword* (1980) is often regarded as marking the beginning of the Hong Kong New Wave.

It was Tam who encouraged Wong to write scripts for TV and films. Wong's screenplay for Tam's dark crime comedy *Final Victory* (1987) was nominated for Best Screenplay at the Hong Kong Film Awards in 1988.[7] Including *Final Victory*, Wong wrote a total of thirteen film scripts.[8] In terms of contents, they mainly covered mainstream genres such as action, melodrama, romance, horror, and sci-fi.

By the mid-1980s, Wong had become a freelance scriptwriter joining film production companies such as The Wing Scope and In-gear Film Production Companies; production houses that were owned by Alan Tang, formerly a renowned Hong Kong actor, producer and director. Some critics have argued that Wong's subsequent nostalgic style took shape during his "apprenticeship" with Alan Tang. Meanwhile, Wong's more commercial tendencies were influenced by his long term collaborator Jeffrey Lau, an important figure in mainstream genre filmmaking in Hong Kong. Their partnership started out with the making of the comedy horror *The Haunted Cop Shop* (1987) and was then further extended by the co-founding of their independent production company, Jet Tone Films Ltd.

In the sections that follow, I will follow the kind of chronological and thematic treatment I have already adopted in my discussion of Stephen Chow in the previous chapter, I shall firstly discuss the production, distribution and exhibition patterns of Wong Kar-wai's pre-1997 films, the intention being is to provide a basis and comparison for the later closer examination of Wong's post-1997 works.

As Tears Go By (1988) and *Days of Being Wild* (1990)

Financially backed by Patrick Tam in 1988, *As Tears Go By* marked Wong's first directorial entry into the world of the Hong Kong film industry. The film is set in the urban districts of Hong Kong Island, Mongkok and Kowloon, and takes place in the 1960s. The film's narrative is indebted to the conventions of the gangster genre and deals with questions of heroism and loyalty within a closely-knit social group. The leading character – Wah struggles to remain loyal to his brother Fly, a member of a triad gang who cannot keep out of trouble, with Wah constantly having to save him whenever trouble occurs. Compared by Jeremy Tambling with Martin Scorsese's *Mean Streets* (1973), the film follows the conventions of Hollywood filmmaking, and focuses on issues that reveal a crisis of masculinity.[9]

More typical of the traditional approach to filmmaking in Hong Kong, the film's script was not completed before the shooting commenced: Wong himself has been quoted as saying that he considers 'shooting from a finished script…boring'[10]. Improvisation of actors' dialogue and the plot became a common occurrence during *As Tears Go By*'s production. Differing from John Woo's approach to the action genre, *As Tears Go By* prioritised the characters' complicated emotional entanglements, and their changing environments. The film's visual style, summarised by Peter Brunette as consisting of 'bright primary colors and unnatural hues shot from bizarre camera angles and juxtaposed through jumpy editing',[11] and the prominent use of international pop music on the soundtrack, including a Cantonese version of the hit "Take My Breath Away" by New Wave band *Berlin* (and originally featured in the Hollywood film *Top Gun*, 1986), sets the film apart from similar genre films produced in Hong Kong at the time. Stephen Teo, meanwhile, has drawn attention to the 'aesthetic edge' to the film's production design as a result of the first-time collaboration between Wong and his art director William Chang – Chang subsequently became the mainstay of Wong's films and has been the pillar of his aesthetic vision ever since.[12] Indeed, some scholars, such as Brunette, have suggested that Chang, and later his cinematographer Christopher Doyle are as responsible as Wong himself for the unique look that has come to be associated with Wong's films and his artistic acclaim.[13]

Despite the film's idiosyncratic artistic elements, however, David Bordwell has pointed out that Hong Kong New Wave films remain strongly rooted in the conventions of local entertainment.[14] *As Tears Go By* is a case in point, especially by featuring two Cantopop superstars, Andy Lau and Jacky Cheung and beauty-contestant-turned-actress Maggie Cheung. It was arguably this blend of the innovative with the familiar and popular that made it successful. At the Hong Kong Film Awards of 1989, Wong was nominated for Best Director, while Chang received Best Art Direction award. But the film not only gained critical attention but also resulted in impressive box office success with a gross of HK $11,532,283.[15] Produced by the local film production company In-Gear, *As Tears Go By* was released theatrically in Hong Kong in June 1988.

The film proved also a hit in South Korea and Taiwan,[16] where it was distributed by Media Asia.[17] World Entertainment (USA), Kino International (USA), and Cinema Mondo (Finland) were involved in distributing the film to international film festival exhibitions and its theatrical release in various targeted regions.[18] *As Tears Go By* succeeded in premiering at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1989. Later in September of 1989, the film was shown at the Toronto Film Festival in Canada. In 1990 it was also shown at the Seattle International Film Festival on May 27th and 28th.[19] The film was re-released in Finland and Sweden in 2006 and New York City, USA in 2008.[20] The record shows that one week's re-release of this film in New York achieved cumulative box office receipts of $8,440.[21] What these figures indicate that from the outset of his directorial career and with his very first film, Wong managed to break into a wide range of international markets, despite or perhaps because of the fact that he was arguably less popular at the time at a local level than someone like Stephen Chow.

Like its predecessor, *Days of Being Wild* (1990)**,** was set in the 1960's with locations in Hong Kong and the Philippines, and portrayed the complex emotions of its main protagonist Yuddy (Leslie Cheung) in his relationships with his foster mother and his various sexual partners. Form film critic Tony Rayns, *Days of Being Wild* remains a landmark in Hong Kong cinema,[22] while Ackbar Abbas has argued that what the film introduced are some of the hallmarks of Wong's later film style,[23] particularly the use of an

episodic, serial structure of repetition, the use of the voice-over as a narrative device and the use of paired shots and situations that do not match up. All these stylistic devices, together and separately, constitute what Abbas believes is 'a new kind of image in the Hong Kong cinema, the disappointing image'.[24] However, despite winning substantial critical acclaim, including receiving five Hong Kong Film Awards, unlike *As Tears Go By*, the film was a commercial failure when it was first released across Asia.

As a big budget project of In-Gear Film Production, Wong has been quoted as being surprised by the film's commercial failure: "…I felt it [*Days of Being Wild*] was going to be a very commercial movie. I thought at that time the gangster movie was approaching a low phase, and there was need for a romantic love story."[25] Wong's response indicates that he believed it was the film's genre that confused audiences. However, as Tony Rayns suggests that the film's 'mistake' was to defy all expectations aroused by the casting of six of the region's top stars Leslie Cheung, Maggie Cheung, Jacky Cheung, Carina Lau, Andy Lau and Tony Leung Chiu-wai; it took two re-releases, massive critical support and a slew of Hong Kong Film Awards to rehabilitate the film and Wong's career.[26] In other words, while the casting of Andy Lau, Jacky Cheung, and Maggie Cheung had helped to promote *As Tears Go By*, the same strategy had worked against the all-star cast of *Days of Being Wild*. However, it is important to note that the film's local and Asian box office failure had little impact on its release and success in Western markets. The film was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival in early 1991, and later that year was theatrically released in New York. After being shown at the Toronto Film Festival in September the same year, the film was distributed and released widely in several European countries in succession between 1994 and 2006.[27]

Ashes of Time (1994)

After *Days of Being Wild*'s failure, Wong returned to screenwriting for several years before he was able to secure the financing for his next project *Ashes of Time*, the only *wu xia* genre film that he has made in his filmmaking career at the time of writing this thesis. According to Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong's study of the film, it took Wong two years to

complete *Ashes of Time*.[28] The film cost HK$47 million[29] owing to the excessively high production costs that continued to rise when the actual shooting began.[30] In this context the film's transnational co-production composition is worth noting: apart from Wong's own company Jet Tone, other partners included Pony Canyon, a Japanese media company, Taiwan-based Scholar Films and Beijing Film Studio, a state-owned production and distribution company.[31] The film was eventually completed at a cost taking it well over the original estimates and leading to several moments of intense anxiety regarding the viability of the project.

The plot of *Ashes of Time* is loosely based on the popular *wu xia* novel *The Eagle Shooting Heroes* by Jin Yong, and Wong made it clear that he 'had no interest in ultra-authenticity'[32] with respect to the novel. In some respects the film can be read as a re-representation of *Days of Being Wild* through the martial arts genre, and Wong teamed up with his regular collaborators Christopher Doyle and William Chang. Brunette argues that the film's refusal to be loyal to its genre is a very good thing indeed,[33] and Hampton states that the most generic aspect about the film is Wong's rejection of generic convention.[34] While spending long months shooting *Ashes* in the 'godforsaken wasteland in remote parts of China',[35] Wong clearly knew what he wanted for his martial arts project:

> I don't know whether I'd ever have the chance- or the desire- to make this kind of film again, so I put everything I knew and thought of this film genre in it…my first experience of kung fu epics came on the radio…During my childhood, these radio shows were one of the sources of my greatest pleasure. And then we stuffed ourselves on chivalric novels. And of course a huge number of these novels and radio shows were made into films. So I wanted to synthesize these different forms of the genre into my own version.[36]

Judged within the conventions of the martial arts genre, the film is conspicuously lacking in sword fighting scenes. Allegedly, Wong requested composer Frankie Chan, a former martial arts choreographer, to write a music score which appears 'more inspired by "spaghetti western music" than the Chinese music traditionally used to provide "local colour"'.[37] *Ashes of Time*'s Chinese title *Dongxie Xidu* can be literally translated as

Malevolent East, Malicious West, which are the sobriquets of the leading characters Huang Yaoshi and Ouyang Feng in the novel that the film is based on. Wong created several additional characters such as Murong Yang, a peasant girl, Peach Blossom and Sunset Warrior, who are not in the original novel. Once again, Wong's interpretation of the genre did not match the expectations of local audiences: the film proved to be a commercial failure by generating a mere nine million dollar box office return when it was finally released locally in September 1994.[38] Reportedly, local audiences responded negatively to the perplexing narrative and empty action scenes. Meanwhile, film scholars such as Ackbar Abbas, Esther Yau and Stephen Teo have come to regard *Ashes* as an unconventional martial arts masterpiece that is visually innovative and provides an appealing complex story which builds upon the intertwining of space and time.[39]

Although Beijing Film Studio had been involved in the film's production at the time,[40] the film was not theatrically released in the Mainland, perhaps owing to the too explicit portrayal of sexuality in the film. But as with *Days of Being Wild*, failure and neglect in one market did not necessarily preclude success in another. Prior to being premiered in South Korea and Japan in 1995 and 1996, *Ashes* had already started to gain international recognition, mainly from film festivals. According to Dissanayake and Wong, Marco Müller, the Artistic Director of the 1994 Venice Film Festival, saw parts of the film and was greatly impressed by it, recommending it to the Festival jury's president Gillo Pontecorvo, who invited the film for competition. [41] The film's experimental cinematography swayed the deliberations of the Festival's panel and won it the Ozella D'oro. Distributors from America and European countries subsequently acquired the film for their regions.

Chungking Express (1994) and *Fallen Angels* (1995)

During a break near the end of filming *Ashes*, Wong spent just two months and a HK$15 million budget making the both commercially and critically successful *Chungking Express* (1994). Credited by the Hong Kong Film Archive as a melodrama feature film, the film was located in the Chungking mansions in Tsim Sha Tsui, one of Hong Kong's major tourist

areas, and Central, Hong Kong's main business district. The film's plot consists of two individual stories, the first story centring on undercover policeman number 223 (Takeshi Kaneshiro) whose has a brief encounter with an unnamed woman in a blonde wig (Brigitte Lin Ching-hisa); the second story deals with another policeman, number 633 (Tony Leung Chiu-wai), and his romance with a girl (Faye Wong) working at the counter of a fast food restaurant. Wong's primary inspiration for this film was a short story entitled *On Seeing the 100% Perfect Girl One Beautiful April Morning* by the Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami.[42]Ackbar Abbas has highlighted Wong's subtle and understated use of humour in this film, including double-takes and the delayed responses, which differs from the broader style of comedy for which Hong Kong cinema has been traditionally famous, as in the films made by the Hui brothers, Stephen Chow or Jackie Chan, which generally rely on lowbrow slapstick or visual gags.[43]

After grossing HK $7,678,549 at the local box office, the film was introduced by director Quentin Tarantino, and through his own distribution company began a limited theatrical run in North America in 1996. The film grossed $32,779 on four screens in its opening weekend. Later, playing at 20 theatres at the point of its widest popularity, the film went on to gross $600,200 in total.[44] This film was also released in South Korea and European countries such as Britain, France, Italy, Germany, Netherland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. His next film, *Fallen Angels* (1995), was originally designed to be the third story in *Chungking Express.* However it failed to materialise at the time due to the problem of *Chungking Express*'s excessive length. Along with *Chungking Express*, this film continued to carry Wong oeuvre and followed the same path in its production method.[45] This has led some film critics to argue that at this point Wong's style was getting too repetitious and replayed the same themes and images that had dominated most of his earlier films.

Happy Together **(1997): The Transition Point**

1997 was an important year and significant departure in Wong's own career, *Happy Together*, his next project, was released locally in Hong Kong approximately a month before the territory's official handover to Mainland China in 1997. The film also reflected a

significant change in Wong's directing style. Peter Brunette argues that the director's cinematic style reaches its zenith in this film; the often overflowing visual and aural effects having been restrained and no longer dominating the film, and there is a greater focus on narrative and character. [46]

The film's story is loosely based on a novel by Argentinean author Manuel Puig, *The Buenos Aires Affair*, and set in Buenos Aires. *Happy Together* was deliberately intended by Wong as his own cinematic response to the impending political change.[47] His decision to locate the film in Argentina may have been indicative of an escapist desire to as he stated in an interview at the time:

> …every time we visit other countries, we people from Hong Kong have been forced to answer the question of 1997 for many, many years. It got pretty boring, repeating your opinion every ten minutes. One of the reasons I chose Argentina was that it is on the other side of the world, and I thought by going there, I would be able to stay away from 1997… [48]

With regard to *The Buenos Aires Affair*'s plot, Wong believed that it contained too many different stories. Consequently he decided to make the simplest possible story with a new encounter between two central characters, who come from Hong Kong but end up in Buenos Aires.[49] However, when arguing for an association of *Happy Together* with Latin American culture, Jeremy Tambling has suggested that apart from the obvious intertextuality with Manuel Puig, the film may also be indirectly influenced by the Argentinean writers Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortazar, whose short story *Blow-up* was used by Antonioni in 1966 for the film of that name.[50] *Blow-up*'s translated Chinese title, *Chunguang Zhaxie,* is in fact the same as the Chinese title for *Happy Together*.

Although Wong set his film mostly in a foreign country for the first time, his central characters Lai Yiu-fai (Leslie Cheung) and Ho Po-wing (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) were still Hong Kongers and their identities are clearly identified at the beginning of the film with close-ups of Lai and Ho's passports as they are stamped for entry into Argentina. This scene underscores the director's motif of exile and nostalgia in this film. Ho and Lai's desire to live in a different, alien place and start their lives over again as revealed later in

the film, may be read as a reorientation of attitudes and beliefs towards Hong Kong's reality from Wong himself. Stephen Teo speculates that '*Happy Together* may also be seen as a product of Wong's own feeling of exile, a state of existence brought about by his outsider status as a Shanghainese in Cantonese Hong Kong and his reputation as the perennial *enfant terrible* of the Hong Kong film industry.'[51]

The film's main characters Lai Yiu-fai and Ho Po-wing are two male lovers. The gay relationship in *Happy Together* is revealed at the very beginning of the film by their sex scene in a hotel room in Buenos Aries. Later, via Lai's voice-over we learn that they left Hong Kong and came to Argentina to start their lives over, and to visit the Iguazu Falls in South America together. However, they get lost on their way to the falls, argue and then separate. A disparate odyssey of the two characters ensues and the film finishes with Lai, now on his own, visiting a food stall in Taiwan on his way back home to Hong Kong. The frank depiction of homosexuality, as noted by Marc Siegel, was rare in Hong Kong cinema at the time.[52] The few genre films made in Hong Kong that touched upon the topic of homosexuality prior to *Happy Together* were mainly within the context of comedy: in Clifton Ko Chi-sum *All's Well, End's Well* (1992), Leslie Cheung portrayed an obviously gay dance instructor who is ludicrously involved in a gender-bending battle of the sexes with his "butch" cousin Teresa Mo; the subject of homosexuality is also raised in Peter Chan's *He's a Woman, She's a Man* (1994). Wong, on the other hand, wanted to approach the subject without making people laugh.[53] Jeremy Tambling refers to *Happy Together* as a surprise in being a Hong Kong film that is so open on the subject of homosexuality; he also compares *Happy Together* with Ang Lee's *Wedding Banquet* (1993) and decides the former film has no intention to 'Westernize' homosexuality by not including a 'fetishizing' of male bodies and not implying 'each homosexual is a caring and sharing figure ready for fatherhood and for a warm, if relatively non-sexual relationship with a woman' in the film, as does *Wedding Banquet*.[54]

During the film's shooting in Buenos Aires, Argentine production companies Cinecolor S. A. and Rental Film supplied the film crew, a laboratory and camera equipment. Jet Tone, together with Wong's recently established Block 2 Picture,[55] and distribution companies

Prenom H., in Japan, and Seowoo Film, in Korea, collaborated on *Happy Together*'s production, exhibition and distribution. A considerable number of Argentinean staff worked closely on the film's production, in roles such as managing the film's locations in Argentina, assisting Doyle and Chang on the film's shooting and art direction, and working on the film's special effects and choreography. Such a wide-ranging transnational collaboration, which not only utilised local talent and resources from both Hong Kong and Argentina, but also received abundant international financial support from Japan and South Korea, is indicative of the global networks within which Wong was beginning to operate. The choice of music that Wong chose in *Happy Together* also underscores this film's transnational nature. The soundtrack includes tango music composed by Argentinean composer Astor Piazzolla and rock music by American musician Frank Zappa. Wong explained these choices in an interview with Jimmy Ngai:

> Subjectively, I really wanted to make the most out of the songs and music by Frank Zappa and Astor Piazzolla- two great musicians I consider to be bad boys of their own tradition…[56]

Once shooting had been completed in Argentina, *Happy Together* underwent a number of additional significant changes. The film originally consisted of a number of scenes involving three female side-characters, one of them played by the Hong Kong pop star Shirley Kwan, but these scenes were eventually deleted. In this context it is worth quoting the answer given by Wong Kar-wai when explaining why he decided to focus solely on the men during the film's post-production process, when he was presented with a question concerning the film's narrative:

> When the rough cut for *Happy Together* was finished in the editing room, I saw nearly three hours of footage. I looked and looked, and I decided that I didn't need an "epic", I needed a simple story told in a regular ninety-minute format. So I chopped away three female side-characters and concentrated on the men. One lesson I learned from *Ashes of Time* was that I tried to tell too much with too little space, and it ended up becoming too stylish in story-telling…And this time I wanted to steer away from any distraction, but stick

> close to the relationship between these men. You can say that after examining different recipes, maybe I wanted to try my hand at consomè.[57]

Wong's response above makes clear that as a result of his previous box office failures, he decided to modify his cinematic style. Jeremy Tambling believes that *Happy Together* represents a fresh start for Wong, by not looking back to his previous films, and also because the film is easier to comprehend by a broader range of audiences.[58] In a review of the film in *The New York Times*, Stephen Holden thought the film was 'a more coherent, heartfelt movie than the director's fantastical Hong Kong romps, *Chungking Express* and *Fallen Angels*.'[59]

Wong's strategies paid off, for on its Hong Kong theatrical release, *Happy Together* made HK $8,600,141 at the box office, and it was also released theatrically in Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. Some scholars have argued that *Happy Together* became Wong's second breakthrough film; it was a carefully planned relationship picture and set a pattern for Wong's bigger and more elaborate productions in subsequent years.[60] The film's marketing campaign highlighted Wong's shrewdly business-oriented showmanship; [61] in this case publicity for *Happy Together* at the local level drew attention to the casting of two of Hong Kong's biggest pop icons, Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Leslie Cheung, and their controversial portrayal of two homosexual partners in the film. The film had a limited theatrical run in North America through Kino International, a theatrical distribution company specialising in classics and foreign language art films, where it grossed US $320,319. It was also shown cross European countries, such as Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands, Sweden and Norway. Film festivals became another important circuit through which the film was exhibited and distributed, including appearances at festivals in Cannes, Montréal and Toronto, New York, Singapore and Reykjavik.[62]

Wong's reputation as an international art house phenomenon was confirmed when *Happy Together* collected the award for Best Director at the Cannes Film Festivals, but the film also won further accolades at the Golden Horse Film Festival in Taiwan in the same year; at the 1998 Hong Kong Film Festival; and in the same year the film was voted the most

popular foreign film at the Arizona International Film Festival.[63] Wong himself was clear about the film as a personal watershed: '*Happy Together* is like a full stop, the end of a certain period in life. We all have our own calendars.' [64]

On the brink of the handover, *Happy Together* serves as a prelude to Wong's post-1997 filmmaking not only because the film fully expresses Hong Kongers' anxieties about the reunion and desire to escape from the reality of the handover, but also because after *Happy Together* Wong continued to express Hong Kong's post-colonial legacy in *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *2046* (2004).

Recollecting the Lost Memory of Chineseness: *In the Mood for Love* (2000)

After *Happy Together*, Wong spent more than two years to prepare, plan and complete filming his next project *In the Mood for Love* (2000). Stephen Teo has pointed out that Wong had initially planned to base this project on a story called *Summer in Beijing*, and it may already have been his intention to commence shooting the story when Wong was working on *Happy Together*, planning to complete its shooting before Hong Kong's handover.[65] Teo further notes that Wong subsequently began to search for ideal locations in Beijing.[66] During his exploration there, Wong started to frame the story within a futuristic context although the central story was still intended to pertain to the post-1997 issue. The transformed story was entitled *2046* and was eventually completed as a sci-fi/fantasy genre film and released in 2004 (more on this film later in this chapter).

As discussed in my previous chapters, the 1997 political handover has encouraged further levels of integration between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Consequently, we have witnessed a cinematic exploration of Hong Kong's reconciliation with a seemingly lost Chineseness in the development of Hong Kong cinema in the post-1997 era. Shooting films in Mainland China has been one of the approaches that Hong Kong filmmakers have enthusiastically embraced in attempting to capture the perhaps already forgotten sensibility. Also as pointed out in my previous chapters, gaining approval from the relevant Mainland authority can present obstacles for Hong Kong filmmakers, and meeting the rigorous

requirements of censorship in Mainland China, as monitored by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT)[67] is one of the obstacles. Under the regulations of film censorship issued by SARFT, films will be banned in Mainland China if they violate the basic principles of the Constitution, or if they threaten the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, or if they divulge state secrets and harm the reputation and interests of the state, or if they instigate national hatred and discrimination, undermine the harmony among ethnic groups, or harm ethnic customs and practices (see Chapter One for more details of the regulations of film censorship in Mainland China). Therefore, it is not entirely surprised to see that Wong's proposal of making a film about a story called 'Summer in Beijing' that was intended to pertain to the post-1997 issue was rebuffed by SARFT, most likely because Wong's intention to address Hong Kong in fifty-year's time following its handover was too sensitive a theme to portray in the eyes of the authorities of SARFT, as it could be construed as threatening 'the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state'.

It could also be that Wong had shown no intention of collaborating with domestic film studios in Mainland China in the film's production.[68] According to the regulations issued by China's State Council concerning the management of the domestic film industry, 'it is forbidden to solely conduct film production in Mainland China, however, foreign film producers and individuals will be permitted if they co-operate with domestic film studios'.[69] Consequently Wong had to take production to another location not only because he did not want to give up on it but also because the stars who were supposed to be performing in the film were still on standby. This, according to Tony Rayns, gave Wong the initial idea to replace his ideal location of Beijing with Macau.[70] Nevertheless, the decision made by SARFT not to permit the production of the film in Beijing not only delayed the start of this film's shooting, it also altered Wong's original vision of this film's central theme from that of addressing Hong Kong in fifty-year's time following its handover, to a story about food, as Wong admitted in an interview conducted by the British journalist Mark Morris.[71] Eventually, this film evolved into the portrayal of an ambiguous relationship between a married man and a married woman set in 1960's Hong Kong.

In the Mood for Love's allegorical treatment of Hong Kong's colonial past has resulted in many scholarly discussions with Vivian P. Y. Lee interpreting Wong's cinematic portrayal of 1960s Hong Kong as a way of "interrogating" nostalgia, which 'works to critique the nostalgic as a predicament of the present'.[72] Adopting a different perspective, Pam Cook has argued that by looking at the blend of the references to popular cultural forms that were used in the film, including songs, novels and fashions derived from the 1930s to the 1950s, the film reveals a deep concern with visiting an idealised, lost culture, and in this respect constitutes less of an exploration of colonial history.[73] Recreating the atmosphere of 1960's Hong Kong, *In the Mood for Love* tells the ambiguous relationship of two married protagonists, shipping-office secretary Su Li-zhen (Maggie Cheung) and newspaper editor Chow Mo-wan (Tony Leung Chiu-wai). In the opening scene of the film, we learn that Su Li-zhen, a Shanghainese woman who has just emigrated to Hong Kong, is renting a room in the apartment of Mrs Suen (Rebecca Pan) for herself and her husband. Chow Mo-wan later also rents a room at the same location for himself and his wife, Chow and Su become neighboring tenants. As the film starts to unfold, we realise that Su and Chow both suspect that their respective spouses are having an affair as their spouses always seem to be on long business trips simultaneously. The suspicion becomes certain when they compare the gifts they receive from their spouses after their spouses return from these long trips. From then on, Su Li-zhen is plunged into a deep sorrow as she cannot understand how her husband could have betrayed her. The increasingly sympathetic emotions that Su and Chow have towards each other bring them closer together.

After meeting up in a restaurant on several occasions and a hotel and the street near where they live, the affection between Su and Chow becomes obvious and starts to grow. As an aside it is interesting to note that the room number of the hotel where they meet was 2046, although Wong later played down any significance to this given that his later film title used the same number. Being a traditional Shanghainese woman, Su represses her physical and emotional desire to start an affair with Chow Mo-wan, and also because Su is consciously aware that they should "not be like them" ("them" referring to Su and Chow's spouses). Chow Mo-wan eventually realises that he is falling in love with Su Li-zhen. In respecting Su's decision "not to be like them", Chow transfers himself to Singapore. The film ends

with a heart-rending scene where we find Chow Mo-wan whispering into a hole in a ruined wall at the Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia in 1966. This silent scene powerfully reveals the frustration and deep sorrow of unrequited love for Su Li-zhen that Chow Mo-wan harbors.

The period in which the film is set, from 1962 to 1966, had significant resonance to Wong personally, who moved from Shanghai to Hong Kong in 1963 at the age of five. Pam Cook notes that Wong declared that in making *In the Mood for Love*, his desire was to recreate that time and place through his own recollections.[74] Not only does the story of this film return to re-discover the lost memory of history and traditional Chinese culture, the music that Wong embraced in the film also indicates the director's apparently willing reconciliation with Chineseness. The film's theme song "Huayang de Nianhua"[75] was sung by the Mainland singer/actress Zhou Xuan, who was popular with audiences of the older generations in Mainland China and Hong Kong for her roles in the classics *Street Angels* (dir. Yuan Muzhi, 1937) and *An All-Consuming Love* (dir. Ho Chao-chang, 1947), and the Chinese title of the film, Huayang Nianhua, is clearly derived from this song's title. For *In the Mood for Love*, Wong turned from *Happy Together*'s intimate Buenos Aries dancing accompanied with Frank Zappa's jazz and Astor Piazzolla's tango to 1960's Hong Kong, where we repeatedly hear Zhou Xuan's "Huangyang de Nianhua" and see the gorgeous cheongsams worn by Maggie Cheung's character from scene to scene.

In the Mood for Love was originally conceived as being a 'low-budget quickie' with two lead actors Tony Leung Chiu-wai and Maggie Cheung and a small supporting cast; in the end, it took Wong and his crew 15 months to finish the film's shooting and editing.[76] Wong expanded on the difficulties that he experienced during the shooting as being first of all, due to financial constraints (from 1997 onwards, Asia was suffering from a major financial crisis, see Chapter One).[77] As a consequence, it brought *In the Mood for Love*'s production to a halt until Wong was able to find sufficient funding. Secondly, some of his long-term collaborators left the crew: cinematographer Christopher Doyle, with whom he had a long-term partnership, had to leave during the course of the production due to other commitments. Mark Li Ping-bing, who had closely collaborated previously with Taiwan

director Hou Hsiao-hsien, was Doyle's replacement. This resulted in more involvement on the part of Wong himself in the film's technical aspects, working on the lighting and camera angles. In other respects, the shooting method adopted for *In the Mood for Love* still exhibited Wong's habitual practice of improvisation, to shoot without a script, and to carry on developing the idea as the shooting continues.

Apart from the ideological and interpretative implications of the film's narrative and style, it is worth noting that even prior to its release, *In the Mood for Love* was tied to a number of other discourses that fed into the film's promotion and ultimate success, especially at the local level. The film managed to garner a significant amount of media attention. Maggie Cheung in particular received substantial coverage for her "return" to Hong Kong as by this time her career had become increasingly international (e.g. her starring role in the French film *Irma Vep*, 1996). The allegedly ambivalent relationship between Cheung and her co-star Tony Leung Chiu-wai was continuously hyped in the media, both during the shooting and after the release of the film; even the exquisitely designed Cheongsam initiated numerous discussions among journalists and fashion critics.

In terms of box office receipts, *In the Mood for Love* proved to be more profitable internationally than in Hong Kong, itself owing to the fact that the film's international box office (HK$99,998,679) was over ten times the local gross (HK$8,663,227).[78] Looking simply at box office figures however paints an incomplete picture and other factors should be taken into account. The turning point achieved with *Happy Together* enabled Wong to reach a wider international audience; he was then able to promote *In the Mood for Love* through visits to international film festivals for example Hamburg, Pusan, Japan, New York and Rotterdam.[79] He also was able to take his cast to several of these events, for example Cannes, Beijing, Shanghai, Taiwan and the United States,[80] where he was able to use the publicity of the stars' presence at the events to promote the film to a wider range of audiences. Hong Kong's return to Mainland China was another significant factor in this context. Prior to the handover it would have been much harder, if not impossible, for Wong to access the Mainland China market than it was post-1997. However the increasing desire for commercial success on the part of China's film bureaus allowed them to successfully

embrace and exploit Wong's notoriety as a result of the increasing levels of cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland. With *Happy Together*'s success at so many international film festivals, Wong was able to take *In the Mood for Love* onto a further level in terms of the film's publicity and marketing attraction. Compared with *Happy Together*, *In the Mood* reached an even wider range of distribution and exhibition which *Happy Together* failed to extend, for example, Malaysia, South Africa, Colombia, Israel, Thailand, Russia, Mexico and the Czech Republic.[81]

2046 (2004): Pursuit of an International Standard Pattern

After nearly seven years of preparation, filming and editing, Wong Kar-wai's eighth feature *2046*, which at the time it was delivered was still an "unfinished" version, eventually only just managed to screen at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, where two years later Wong would be honored by becoming the first Chinese president of the international festival jury. As is documented by Davis and Yeh, the delivery of this film at Cannes created chaos because not only did the film delay the festival, it also altered the scheduling of other films, due to Wong's habitual practice of editing films until literally the last minute.[82] However, the reviews received from the Cannes Festival, as Davis and Yeh put it, were 'lukewarm and even hostile',[83] although it appears that other critics reviewed the film with enthusiasm. *Time* magazine hailed *2046* as 'one of the best films of the year',[84] while the UK's *Guardian* noted, '*2046* is filled with mystery. It is intriguing and a film with a great depth.'[85]

Perhaps in response to the 'lukewarm' reviews at Cannes, Wong took *2046* back to the editing suite and started to work on its re-editing before the film was released in Shanghai in September 2004.[86] Opening in the year 1966, with enhanced futuristic science fiction elements, the film returns to dealing with one of Wong's pre-1997 obsessions, namely entangled relationships between characters and a complex, enigmatic narrative. The story begins with journalist Chow Mo-wan returning from Singapore and commencing writing a novel about the future, entitled *2046*. In the novel, a mysterious train leaves for 2046 every once in a while. According to the film's promotional tagline: 'In 2046, nothing ever

changes. Everyone who goes to 2046 has the same intention, which is to recapture their lost memories.' In the film, "2046" is less a date and more a destination where people want to get to in order to search for a lost love and memory.

Wong's initial motivation for making the film suggests strongly that "2046" is significantly related to 1997. When Hong Kong returned to Mainland China, Hong Kong was promised that everything would remain unchanged for 50 years. Wong was fascinated by the promise and the number, therefore he wanted to make a film that attempted to explore the fantasy world where love stories are mingled with this number.[87] Perhaps the meaning of "2046" is never meant to be clear and by making the film with this particular title, as Peter Brunette observes in watching the press kit that accompanied the film's U.S. release,[88] Wong attempted to generate 'a place to hide or store certain memories, thoughts, impulses, hopes, and dreams'.[89]

Some critics have read the film as the sequel to *In the Mood for Love*, the clues perhaps lying in Tony Leung Chiu-wai's character Chow Mo-wan sharing the same name as the character in *In the Mood for Love*, while in the opening scene of *2046* a shot of a black hole is revealed, which recalls the final scene of *In the Mood for Love* where Chow Mo-wai whispers his secrets into a hole in a wall of the Angkor Wat ruins. In addition, continuously repeated close-ups of the number 2046 of a hotel room in *2046* reminds us of *In the Mood for Love*, as it is the same hotel room, in which Chow Mo-wai and Su Li-zhen conducted their secret liaisons. In the same way, a mysterious woman gambler in black played by Mainland actress Gong Li, who is also called Su Li-zhen, has a brief encounter with Chow in the film. More complicatedly, Maggie Cheung, who plays Su Li-zhen in *In the Mood for Love*, appears briefly in *2046* as a cyborg on the train that goes to 2046. Despite all the obvious connections we may read from both films, Wong himself, has clarified on more than one occasion, that the story of *2046* is not a sequel.[90]

Wong gathered his familiar crew, Christopher Doyle (assisted by Kwan Pung-leung and Lai Yiu-fai) and William Chang to work on the film's cinematography and production design in order to pursue a vivid colour contrast and off-centre framing that emphasise the

characters' emotions of feeling lost and empty, alongside the flickering lights that symbolise time. Wong also introduced CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) effects to this film. The film's official website explains that the use of CGI was motivated by a desire to 'break the limitations of time and space and create a dreamy, romantic blend of the past and future worlds'. [91] The French company BUF created the effects; the company's first instance of working on a film from Asia.[92] BUF has come to be regarded as one of the most innovative visual effects companies in the world for the quality and originality of their work, which have earned them numerous awards. Recent projects that they have worked on include Hollywood blockbusters such as *Matrix II, III* (2003), *Van Helsing* (2004), *Spiderman 3* (2007) and *The Dark Knight* (2008). Stephen Teo argues that *2046* represents several landmarks for Wong: it was Wong's first feature film shot in 'scope format'; secondly, the film became his most expensive and longest feature in terms of its running time to date; and thirdly, it contained the most dialogue. [93]

Despite the transition Wong was going through with this film, his trademark cinematic techniques remain present in the film: voiceover narration, constantly playful ambiguity that teases the boundary of the plot's incomprehensibility, obsession with ruptured space, lost time and memories and his unique visual expressivity. Music continues to play a crucial role in *2046*, however the genres that Wong embraces further reveals the film's trend towards internationalisation. For the film's main theme Wong chose music from Japanese composer Shigeru Umebayashi in order to appropriately dramatise the film's absorbing mystery. Critically regarded as a more comprehensive selection than usual are the pieces composed by French film composer Georges Delerue and Polish film composer Zbigniew Preisner. In addition, Wong used arias from Bellini's classical operas *Norma* and *Il Pirata*, which accompany the characters' slow motion sequences and the struggles that the characters suffer when they confront unrequited love. Peter Brunette has suggested that opera provides a perfect setting to explore Wong's familiar themes. [94]

2046 took Wong nearly five years to shoot in various locations in Thailand, Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong. The investors for this film came from various regions and countries: Japan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, France and Italy. [95] The level of

transnational collaboration in terms of the film's production, distribution and exhibition had advanced even further compared to his earlier *Happy Together* and *In the Mood for Love*, which boosted the film's international box office receipts to the impressive and best yet HK$149,911,536 - over twenty times its Hong Kong receipts.[96] Furthermore, Wong utilised his burgeoning reputation to gain access to the top media stars from the area encompassing Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China and Japan in order to enhance *2046*'s attraction to a wider audience.

After *2046*, Wong Kar-wai signed a joint production and distribution deal with Fox Searchlight Pictures to make English-language films. After directing a forty-minute episode, *The Hand* (starring Gong Li and Chang Chen), in the portmanteau film *Eros* (2004) with Michelangelo Antonioni and Steven Soderbergh, Wong made his first English language feature *My Blueberry Nights* in 2007, starring Hollywood A-list stars Natalie Portman, Jude Law and Rachel Weisz. Elsewhere I have written a detailed textual analysis of this film.[97] Here I wish to merely state that in many respects *Blueberry* echoes Wong's earlier *Chungking Express*, the first feature that marks Wong's entry to international success. The "secret" of both films' success lies in Wong's craftsmanship and dealing with stars, genres and dreamlike visual expressivity. Apart from generally positive critical reviews,[98] *My Blueberry Nights* managed to gross an impressive approximately HK$23 million worldwide.[99] With this film, Wong secured his status as one of the world's prominent directors, not just aesthetically but also commercially.

Conclusion

From a closer examination of Wong's pre-1997 and post-1997 films, we can see that in under a decade he has moved from the stage where he experimented with local projects in different genres to the stage, where he has obtained an international stature and has shown, according to Davis and Yeh, 'great expertise in leveraging auteur mystique to the highest levels of anticipation, speculation and investment'.[100] This summons the question of to what extent, has this rise in Wong's status on the international stage been influenced by the 1997 transition of Hong Kong being handed over to Mainland China?

As I have outlined in this chapter, arguably the most crucial text in this respect is *Happy Together*. This film represents several landmarks for Wong. Firstly, it won him best director award at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival. The award very much confirmed that his auteuristic cinematic art had reached its zenith. Secondly, unlike any of Wong's pre-"*Happy Together*" films, mainly probing in various different directions, *Happy Together* is a successful case in which he temporarily abandoned his complex and ambiguous narratives with a more streamlined mode of storytelling. The film is the outcome of Wong's long-term planning and calculated approach and his improvisatory creation and sets the pattern for his later productions. Most importantly, it serves as his personal instant political allegory that was prompted by the 1997 transition. Although his filmmaking was always to some extent international in terms of outreach, since *Happy Together*, this has intensified.

Looking at Wong's post-1997 creations, *In the Mood for Love* and *2046*, it is apparent that his stylistic cinematic technique has not changed much, although it could be argued that it has become more mature. However, these two films further proved Wong's ability for successfully financing and marketing his productions through multinational channels. Davis and Yeh have argued that Wong's business strategy tends to rely mainly on accessing the finance-distribution-marketing packages from film festivals and international film markets.[101] If this is true, then increased market size in mainland China, easier accessibility in terms of cooperation with Mainland film groups and easier accessibility to theatrical release in Mainland, which have resulted since the 1997 handover, all proved convenient to Wong.

While Wong's cinema attracts international admiration, at the same time, it is evident from my case studies that he frequently has failed to fully win over his local Hong Kong audience. To some extent this may be explained by Wong's own personal and artistic identity. Unlike Stephen Chow, who was born in Hong Kong, Wong emigrated from Shanghai to Hong Kong when he was young. The nostalgic emotions that he memorialises about Shanghai culture and influences that he experienced when he grew up in Hong Kong can be traced, to a greater or lesser extent, in the films that he has made. Perhaps in this

sense, it can be said that the cultural depth presented by Wong's films is more complex than that of Stephen Chow's films, and perhaps in this sense, Wong's films are both too avant-garde, but also not Hong Kong enough and too international for Hong Kong local audiences when compared with Chow's films.

Notes

[1] Larry Gross, 'Nonchalant Grace', in *Sight and Sound*, Issue 6, no. 9, September 1996, p. 8.
[2] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 2.
[3] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time*, p. 2.
[4] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 1-5.
[5] Robert M. Payne, 'Ways of Seeing Wild: The Cinema of Wong Kar-wai', in *Jump Cut*, no. 44, Fall 2001, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc44.2001/payne%20for%20site/wongkarwai1.html, accessed 2 September 2008.
[6] Law Kar, 'An Overview of Hong Kong's New Wave Cinema', In Esther Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 39-42.
[7] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0094387/awards, accessed 8 September 2008.
[8] *1913-2006 Hong Kong Filmography*, collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
The other films are: *Once Upon a Rainbow* (1982), *Just for Fun* (1983), *Silent Romance* (1984), *The Intellectual Trio* (1984), *Sweet Surrender* (1986), *Rosa* (1986), *Goodbye My Love* (1986), *The Final Test* (1987), *The Haunted Cop Shop series* (1987, 1988), *Dragon and Tiger Fight* (1987), *Walk on Fire* (1988).
[9] Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 1.
[10] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. xvii.
[11] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 6.
[12] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 29.
[13] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 15-16.
[14] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 265.
[15] The data is collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
[16] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 16.
[17] Media Asia was one of Asia's largest production companies and distributor for films made in Hong Kong. The company's distribution targets were more than 30 major international markets. See http://www.mediaasia.com/about_us_zh.htm, accessed 5 September 2008; also see Chapter One for a discussion of Media Asia.
[18] http://www.variety.com/profiles/Film/main/113460/As%20Tears%20Go%20By.html?dataSet=1, accessed 5 September 2008.
[19] http://www.variety.com/profiles/Film/main/113460/As%20Tears%20Go%20By.html?dataSet=1, accessed 5 September 2008.
[20] This data is collected from *Variety* online resource (see note. 35) and The Internet Movie Database: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096461/, accessed 5 September 2008.
[21] http://www.inbaseline.com/project.aspx?view=DomesticBoxOffice&project_id=113460, accessed 5 September 2008.
[22] Tony Rayns, '*Ah Fei Zhenjuan* (*Days of Being Wild*)', in *Sight and Sound*, December 1994, pp. 41-42.
[23] Ackbar Abbas, 'The Erotics of Disappointment', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), pp. 39-81.
[24] Ackbar Abbas, The Erotics of Disappointment, p. 54.
[25] Fredric Dannen and Barry Long, *Hong Kong Babylon: An Insider's Guide to the Hollywood of the East* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), p. 147.
[26] Tony Rayns, '*Ah Fei Zhenjuan* (*Days of Being Wild*)', in *Sight and Sound*, December 1994, p. 42.

[27] The data is collected from IMDB website, http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0101258/releaseinfo, accessed 5 September 2008.
[28] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 1.
[29] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time*, p. 1.
[30] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time*, pp. 18-19.
[31] The data is collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
[32] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 32.
[33] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 32.
[34] H. Hampton, 'Blur as Genre', in *Artforum*, no. 34, March 1996, p. 93.
[35] Jimmy Ngai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), p. 107.
[36] Bérénice Reynaud, 'Entretien avec Wong Kar-wai', in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 490, April 1995, p. 39; see also Peter Brunette *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 35.
[37] David Martinez, 'Chasing the Metaphsical Express', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), p. 30.
[38] The data is collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
[39] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997); see also Esther C. M. Yau, *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); see also Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimension* (London: British Film Institute, 1997).
[40] Shanghai International Film Festival Chose to show the film's Redux version in 2008.
[41] Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 19.
[42] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 50.
[43]Ackbar Abbas, 'The Erotics of Disappointment', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), p. 66-67.
[44] The data is collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
[45] *Fallen Angels* was also shot in Hong Kong and produced by Wong Kar-wai's Jet Tone Production, and later it was distributed and released into America, Canada and most European countries such as Netherland, Germany and Portugal.
[46] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), pp. 70-72.
[47] Jimmy Ngai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), p. 112.
[48] Jimmy Ngai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai', p. 112.
[49] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 72; see also Michael Ciment and H. Niogret, 'Entretien avec Wong Kar-wai', in *Positif*, no. 442, December 1997, pp. 8-14.
[50] Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), pp. 25-29.
[51] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 101.
[52] Marc Siegel, 'The Intimate Spaces of Wong Kar-wai', in Esther C. M. Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 277.
[53] Marc Siegel, 'The Intimate Spaces of Wong Kar-wai', in Esther C. M. Yau (ed.), *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 279; see also Bérénice Reynaud, '*Happy Together* de Wong Kar-wai', in *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 513, May 1997, p. 76.
[54] Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), pp. 65-67.
[55] Wong Kar-wai established Block 2 in 1997, which is a subsidiary of Jet Tone. Block 2 is to handle international co-productions for foreign art-house and video/cable markets; see Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 153.
[56] Jimmy Ngai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai', in Danièle Rivière (ed.), *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), p. 115.
[57] Jimmy Ngai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai', p. 105.
[58] Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 4.

[59] Stephen Holden, *Renewable Love, and Other Fallacies of Youth*, http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9E05E2DE153CF933A25753C1A961958260, accessed 5 March 2009.
[60] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 153.
[61] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries*, pp. 153-155.
[62] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118845/releaseinfo, accessed 5 March 2009.
[63] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118845/releaseinfo, accessed 5 March 2009.
[64] From *Buenos Aires Zero Degree*, directed by Kwan Pun-Leung and Amos Lee, an hour-long documentary on the making of *Happy Together* that was released as part of special features in *Happy Together*'s DVD version.
[65] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 114.
[66] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 114.
[67] SARFT is in overall charge of radio, television and film industries in China and directly administers any state-owned enterprises engaged in the radio, television and film industries.
[68] This film was co-produced by Wong's own companies Jet Tone Production, Block 2 Pictures and a French production company Paradis Films.
[69] *Cinemas & Film Production in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Ltd., 2004), p. 26.
[70] Tony Rayns, 'In the Mood for Edinburgh', in *Sight and Sound*, Issue 10, no. 10, August 2000, p. 16; see also Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 14.
[71] Mark Morris, *Cool under Pressure*, http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2000/oct/01/features, accessed 5 October 2012.
[72] Vivian P. Y. Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 23.
[73] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 5-6.
[74] Pam Cook, *Screening the Past: Memory and Nostalgia in Cinema*, p. 5.
[75] "Huayang de Nianhua" is a Chinese expression that literally means blossom time; normally it is used to describe a girl as being in her prime.
[76] Tony Rayns, 'In the Mood for Edinburgh', in *Sight and Sound*, Issue 10, no. 10, August 2000, p. 16.
[77] Wong Kar-wai was interviewed by Michael Ciment and Hubert Niogret during the 53rd Cannes Film Festival in May 2000, which was released in the DVD version of *In the Mood for Love*.
[78] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 152.
[79] http://www.wkw-inthemoodforlove.com/eng/schedule/schedule.asp, accessed 19 June 2009.
[80] This can be found from the footages that are shown as extra feature of *In the Mood for Love*'s DVD version.
[81] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118694/releaseinfo, accessed 20 June 2009.
[82] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 151.
[83] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 151.
[84] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009.
[85] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009.
[86] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 151.
[87] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009.
[88] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 105.
[89] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 105.
[90] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009; see also Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 105; see also Tsang Fan, 'Journey to 2046/2047', in *City Magazine*, Issue 337, October 2004, p. 191.
[91] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009.
[92] http://www.buf.fr/main.php?class=Feature, accessed 21 June 2009.
[93] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 136.
[94] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 107.
[95] http://www.wkw2046.com/glass1XGA.html, accessed 20 June 2009.

[96] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), pp. 152-153.
[97] Sherry Xiaorui Xu, 'A Journey to the West: Hong Kong Film Auteur Wong Kar-wai's Response to Globalization?', in *ACAH & ACSS Conference Proceedings*, 2010, pp. 361-370.
[98] http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/04/18/DD46105VIB.DTL, http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=festivals&jump=review&reviewid=VE1117933646&cs=1&p=0,accessed 21 June 2009.
[99] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 220.
[100] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 154.
[101] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 155.

Chapter Four: Fruit Chan: From Independent to Mainstream

Introduction

In the previous two chapters I discussed the careers of Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, which in both cases have spanned a time frame from the late 1980s onwards. Although Fruit Chan is also commonly associated with what is referred to as Hong Kong's 'Second Wave' that began in the late 1980s and 1990s (alongside colleagues such as Wong, Stanley Kwan, Clara Law and others, and distinct from Hong Kong's 'first' New Wave in the 1970s and 1980s that included filmmakers such as Tsui Hark, Ann Hui and Patrick Tam), he may belong to a more specifically "1997-transitional" wave, whereas Chow has been renowned for his engagement with local popular genre formulae, and while Wong has been acclaimed primarily for his visual style, Chan became known for the attention in his screenplays to social themes and political issues, and for the gritty realism and bleak look of his films more generally.

1997 marked the point at which Chan began to gain acknowledgment in the industry, following the release of his second directorial feature film and first independent production, *Made in Hong Kong*. Tony Rayns has considered the latter as the first Hong Kong feature that can truly be regarded as an "indie" on the basis of it having been thus defined at film festivals such as the Sundance Film Festival.[1] Most of the writing on Chan over the decade has emphasised his status as one of Hong Kong cinema's true mavericks, as someone who has consistently swum against the tide of trends and existing conventions, and who seems to be operating almost completely "outside" the mainstream industry. However as I shall argue in this chapter, this assessment offers a too simplistic picture. It is worth remembering that Chan began his career as an assistant director to several popular genre directors, including Jackie Chan. I shall also argue that his later independent productions have to some extent exploited their 'enterprising novelty'[2] (in the words of Tony Rayns) to occupy a niche position in the development

of Hong Kong cinema.

From 2000 onwards, many of Chan's films have dealt with the reality of Mainland immigrants' everyday life in Hong Kong through narratives that emphasise cultural immersion and conflict. Gary Xu has argued that Chan's depiction of the multiple identities covered under the heading of Chineseness attest to his films belonging to a form of transnational Hong Kong cinema.[3] In terms of finance, too, Chan's films have increasingly transcended their local origins, and moved towards trans-border, often pan-Asian, sometimes intercontinental, agreements. In the case of *Little Cheung* (1999), following the loss of local financial support, Chan successfully turned to Japanese broadcaster NHK and the South Korean Pusan Promotion Plan.[4] For *Durian Durian* (2000), part of the funding came from the European-based film sales company, Wild Bunch.[5] Adopting a different strategy, *Public Toilet* (2002)[6], Chan's first DV-shot feature, opted against transnational forms of financing and became acclaimed for its zero production values.[7] In 2004, *Dumplings* marked a move away from independent filmmaking and became Chan's most commercial film to date. As a horror film a significant departure in terms of his filmmaking style and direction, the production was 'funded by the industry' and by professionals who were actively involved within the mainstream.[8] Chan also abandoned his use of amateur actors and for the first time employed A-list pop icons and professional actors. Distributed internationally as part of the pan-Asian horror omnibus *Three…Extremes* (2005), *Dumplings* was sold to several territories, including the US where Lions Gate bought the film's distribution rights.[9]

As I demonstrated in my chapters on Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, my analysis of Chan's career will demonstrate how Hong Kong filmmakers from the late 1990s onwards have begun tapping into more diverse sources of funding and more flexible modes of production. I also wish to speculate further on Fruit Chan's striking transition from the independent to the mainstream, in order to illuminate possible interactions between this transition and the conditions that were concurrently prevalent in the Hong

Kong film industry.

***Made in Hong Kong* (1997)**

Before I begin my specific investigation of Chan's debut as an "independent" director with *Made in Hong Kong*, it is necessary to briefly mention his directorial debut *Finale in Blood* (1991). This is chiefly in order to understand Chan's background in the Hong Kong film industry, which helps in determining to what extent this affects the production of *Made in Hong Kong* on every level. As stated above, Chan entered the Hong Kong film industry as an assistant director for established directors, which included Kirk Wong at Century Film Company, and Shu Kei and Tony Au at Golden Harvest. Wendy Gan has argued that the experience and ability that Chan acquired whilst an assistant director encouraged him to utilise sets and props to make his own debut film, *Finale in Blood*, while he was working on Tony Au's *Au Revoir Mon Amour*, finding time whenever *Au Revoir Mon Amour*'s shooting was interrupted.[10] According to Gan, *Finale* is 'a product of the commercial film industry'[11], although the film was only a critical success, but not financially.[12]

Edward L. Davies has suggested that Chan's idiosyncratic style did not fully develop until *Made in Hong Kong*.[13] Nevertheless, some similarities in terms of filmic style are evident in both films. For example, Chan introduced a ghost story into *Finale in Blood*, which at the time was one of the more popular genres for local filmmakers to pursue, following the immense commercial success of *A Chinese Ghost Story* (dir. Hark Tsui, 1987). Also reminiscent of Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1987), *Blood* tells the story of Fang Yin (Nonie Tao), who was killed in the course of a love triangle that goes tragically wrong, and who returns as a revenge-seeking ghost.

Esther Cheung has suggested that the theme of ghostliness in cinema can often offer insights into how people relate to their city and their past.[14] Exemplifying this, Chan used ghostliness in both *Blood* and *Made in Hong Kong* to reflect the uncertainty and

tensions of Hong Kong's relationship to its past. The portrayal of deserted and old buildings, together with dark and gloomy cinematography all add to an underlying atmosphere of ghostliness. Chan was also able to present this feeling by utilising sets, props and leftover films that he could scavenge from other films, a habit he seems to have formed from the beginning of his filmmaking. *Made in Hong Kong*, for example, was shot using twenty four hundred meters of leftover unprocessed film.[15]

It took Chan three years to prepare *Made in Hong Kong*'s script. Yingjin Zhang has suggested that the film challenged the established Hong Kong system of superstars and blockbusters with its low-production model.[16] According to Dissanayake, Chan worked with a five-member crew to assist him in making the film, all of them working for free.[17] Post-production costs were minimal compared to accepted standards, aided by the fact that pop icon Andy Lau, and the well-known director, distributor and critic Shu Kei offered support in providing Chan with an office and other material requirements.[18] Made for a fraction (HK$500,000) of what a commercial film in Hong Kong at the time would have cost, *Made in Hong Kong* went on to achieve the very impressive figure of HK$1.9 million in box office receipts. For a highly commercially-driven industry such as Hong Kong cinema, *Made in Hong Kong* was a groundbreaking work that offered a new direction. It is worth pointing out that although Chan spent three years preparing the film, its actual shooting was completed in a mere four months.[19] This contrasts with the craftsmanship of a director like Wong Kar-wai, who spends years on filming his projects, and in this respect Chan's style of shooting *Made in Hong Kong* reveals traces of commercial filmmaking conventions.

In its narrative, *Made in Hong Kong* situates its four main protagonists in the period approaching July 1997. The film deals with four adolescents, Moon (Sam Lee Chan-sam) who is suffering from his parents' separation, Sylvester (Wenders Li), a mentally disabled who is bullied by other youngsters, Lam Yuk-ping (Neiky Yim Hui-chi) who needs a kidney transplant and Susan (Amy Tam Ka-chuen), a high school

pupil who commits suicide as a result of unrequited love. It is worth mentioning in this context that Chan was born in Guangzhou and raised in Hong Kong. According to Natalia Chan Siu-hung, as an immigrant from Mainland China, Chan spent over ten years of his childhood in public housing, where Moon lives in the film.[20] Chan is thus likely to have drawn on his own experience in making *Made in Hong Kong*. The film's four characters represent different neglected social groups who are portrayed as disoriented. Discussing the meaning of the film, Dissanayake has argued that Chan 'explores the registers of consciousness and the symbolic world of urban proletarian youth, and thus the film confers visibility on the invisible'.[21] Arguably one of the "invisible" messages is an expression of the anxiety and concern over the alienated youth experience triggered by the harsh reality of Hong Kong society.

Subsequent to Chan's film, there has been an entire subgenre of "triad kid" films made in Hong Kong, examples including the *Young and Dangerous* series (dir. Andrew Lau and Manfred Wong, 1996-2000) and *Once upon a Time in Triad Society* (dir. Cha Chuen-yee, 1996).[22] The former film series was based on a popular Hong Kong comic book, casted pop stars such as Ekin Cheung and Jordan Chan, and recycled action scenes and plotlines with the aim of achieving as much commercial value as possible. The latter film is admittedly set in a conventional popular genre but was received as artistically more rewarding by the Hong Kong Film Critic Society.[23]

This is not to say that all these later films were necessarily indebted to Chan's influence, or that Chan's film itself pursued an original theme. As Ruby Cheung has correctly noted, a number of cinematic classics elsewhere have dealt with the subject of juvenile delinquency, for instance, *Rebel without a Cause* (dir. Nicholas Ray, 1955), *A Brighter Summer Day* (dir. Edward Yang, 1992) and *La Haine* (dir. Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995).[24] There are certainly a number of references from some of these classics to be found in *Made in Hong Kong*, in that all of these films deal with the conflicts between parents and troubled children, interacting friendship (some may evolve into romance) between youngsters and the coincidence of tragedy and fatal challenges. Interestingly, of all the

films mentioned above, *Made in Hong Kong* shares arguably the greatest similarity in terms of narrative with *La Haine*.

In discussing the film's combination of social realism and popular cinema, Dissanayke has argued that *Made in Hong Kong* betrays its origins in commercial formulae by drawing on two of Hong Kong's most popular genres: gangster films and melodramas.[25] Gan agrees with this point, stating that '*Made in Hong Kong* is still haunted by generic traces.'[26] Gan also argues that these traces can be seen as 'an attempt to resist typical HK genres to create a new urban realism'.[27]

Grossing HK$1.9 million at the local box office, *Made in Hong Kong* became an overnight sensation. Tony Rayns has pointed out that the Hong Kong Film Festival originally rejected the just completed *Made in Hong Kong* in April 1997.[28] A year later, the film was selected by the Festival and won the awards for Best Film, Best Director and Best Newcomer (Sam Lee Chan-sam). The film was also a winner at the 1997 Golden Horse Awards in Taiwan with the awards for Best Director and Best Original Script.[29] Subsequently, *Made in Hong Kong* enjoyed worldwide circulation, with Chan's own company Nicetop Independent Limited holding the film's distribution rights.[30] Following in the footsteps of Wong Kar-wai on the international festival circuit, *Made in Hong Kong* was successfully released in South Asia (South Korea, Singapore and Japan) and Europe (Belgium, Netherlands, France and UK).[31] At the Locarno Film Festival, the film was given the Special Jury Award.[32] Fruit Chan's name effectively was made by this film locally and internationally. However, due to the sensitive themes relating to the 1997 handover and the triads that were dealt with in the film, *Made in Hong Kong* was banned by the Mainland China Film Bureau. Perhaps most importantly, the success of *Made in Hong Kong* has facilitated the subsequent opportunities for a range of Hong Kong directors, such as Herman Yau, in producing alternative independent films.

***The Longest Summer* (1998)**

The Longest Summer (1998) has received some prior critical attention which has mainly focused on the film's narrative, theme, its documentary technique and cinematic style.[33] Following a similar model that Chan had constructed for *Made in Hong Kong, The Longest Summer* continues to explore the life of the lower social classes by centring on a group of dismissed Chinese soldiers in the British Army who struggle to survive in a rapidly changing society as it enters the political transition. Among this group, disaffected unemployed Ga Yin (Tony Ho Wah-chiu) has to deal with pressure from his money worshiping family who want Ga Yin to bring in some living expenses. Having failed to make a living by finding conventional employment, Yin decides to join his brother Go Suen (Sam Lee Chan-sam) in illegal activities associated with the underworld. When the group plans to rob a bank, they are involved in an extremely violent gun fight in which one of them, Bobby (Bobby Lam), is killed. Ga Yin's brother Suen takes the stolen money and absconds. At the end, Ga Yin has undergone a mental breakdown and mistaken one of the young gangsters for his brother. Ga Yin violently tortures the young gangster and shoots a bullet through the youngster's cheeks, which explains why in the opening sequence of the film there is a young passenger on a subway train who has a hole in his face that the viewer can see through.

The Longest Summer's Chinese title *Qu nian yan hua te bie duo* literally translates as "there were many fireworks displays last year". Before Chan finalised *Summer*'s narrative, he was engaged in carrying out random shooting. Subsequently he started to shoot the ceremony of the handover and its preparation at the beginning of 1997. The plot did not come to him until he was inspired by the arrival of the People's Liberation Army on the morning of July 1. The scene of the army's arrival prompted Chan to wonder whether Hong Kong used to have ownership of its army when it was a British Colony. In fact, Hong Kong as a colony did not have its own army, only Chinese soldiers who served in the British military. Consequently, Chan's aim for his new project was to explore the identity crisis that Chinese soldiers confront during this transitional period.[34] While he was filming the ceremony of the handover, he also

captured a considerable amount of footage of firework displays and, accordingly, employed the footage as *Summer*'s setting. This "impulsiveness" vindicates scholar Gary Xu's overall assessment that 'chance produced the film [*The Longest Summer*]'[35].

In exploring the opening sequence of the film, Xu considers the scene to be a notable instance of the influence of surrealism in Chan's films.[36] However, perhaps more important for the purposes of this thesis is Xu's acknowledgment of Chan's distinctive filmmaking methods that blur the boundaries between filmmaking and reality, a mode of production that indicates the mechanisms of global capital,[37] and most importantly, the explorations in his films that explicitly link Hong Kong and Mainland China on the basis of everyday life.[38] These explorations illustrate for Xu that 'Chineseness is part and parcel of transnational Hong Kong cinema',[39] and represents an unprecedented development that has been fundamentally shaped by the changes brought about by the handover in 1997.

Compared to *Made in Hong Kong*, *The Longest Summer* embraces an obvious documentary style, reflected in the film's usage of location footage from where the ceremonies and the fireworks displays were held. It is interesting to contrast this with Wong Kar-wai's near-contemporary *In the Mood for Love* (2000), which I discussed in a previous chapter, and which includes documentary footage from French television coverage of President de Gaulle's visit to Cambodia. Wong's intention in using documentary footage is to connect the character to a momentous historical event in order to conjure up nostalgia. In the case of Chan's film, setting the footage of the actual ceremonies and fireworks displays to depict *The Longest Summer*'s place in time, the idea is to imbue the film with the theme of political upheaval in order to convey a sense of authenticity. Compared to *Made in Hong Kong*, this film has a much more direct and explicitly political content. Shumei Shi has argued that Chan was fully aware of the value of political film in the art-house market.[40] Nevertheless, in his own statements, Chan has frequently downplayed any purposeful political agenda. When asked in an interview about the influences for the style of his films, for example, he recalled:

> …After *Made in Hong Kong* I had time and film stock. We had nothing to do, as the film wasn't going to film festivals because nobody knew us. But the hand-over campaign was coming, so we asked Sam Lee to be in some shots, for what purpose we didn't know. We just shot it, and when *Made in Hong Kong* became successful, we reviewed the footage, we found out we could make a story using this old footage…[41]

According to Shumei Shi, Chan's film 'performs a double-voiced act: one that actively endorses and allows for national allegorical readings through an act of self-commodification and one that ironises that endorsement with mundane details and practices of the everyday.'[42] For Shi, Chan's 'double-voiced' approach resulted in ideological contradictions. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the political ambiguities of Chan's films have become crucial to his commercial success, especially after 1997.

The Longest Summer was produced under a collaboration agreement between Fruit Chan's Nicetop Independent and Andy Lau's production company Teamwork.[43] Mengyang Cui has noted that the budget was relatively low.[44] Chan carried on casting non-professional actors, apart from Sam Lee Chan-sam who had already performed important roles in big budget productions prior to *The Longest Summer*, for example, *A True Mob Story* (dir. Wong Jing, 1998), *Beast Cops* (dir. Gordon Chan Kar-seung and Dante Lam, 1998), *Young and Dangerous: The Prequel* (dir. Andrew Lau Wai-keung, 1998). Two of the non-professional actors, Tony Ho and Jo Kok became professionals after *Summer* and have become prominent within mainstream filmmaking, for instance, *Infernal Affairs* (2002), *New Police Story* (2006), *Hit Team* (dir. Dante Lam, 2001) and *Mad Detective* (2007). Natalia Chan Sui-hung has drawn similarities between Chan's practice of employing non-professionals with the traditions of neo-realist filmmaking, and the way in which non-professionals are selected to fit the characters physically, while also suggesting parallels between their roles and their real lives.[45] In this respect it is interesting to compare the backgrounds of two of the non-professional actors in this film, Tony Ho and Jo Kok. Ho started out to as Andy Lau's on-stage dancer and his muscularly physical features fit well with the film's soldier character. Jo Kok is related to the comedian Vincent Kok, famous for his appearances in a considerable number of Stephen Chow comedies, and Fruit Chan believed that Jo Kok naturally possessed the manner and temperament of a gangster's girlfriend.

Wendy Gan has suggested that *The Longest Summer* illustrates the difficulty in shaking off the conventions of the Hong Kong film industry and the need to please local film audiences.[46] Dissanayake comes to a different conclusion by arguing that although the film works within representational codes of the gangster film, Chan carefully and critically adapts these generic codes.[47] His aim, in Dissanayake's opinion, is 'not to infuse his filmic text with a sense of heroism but to offer a commentary on the difficult task of survival for the beleaguered urban proletariat.'[48] To Dissanayake, the film's graphic – more explicit than usual for a local production- is necessary because it 'informs that the film is a comment on the uncertain lives of the proletariat.'[49]

In order to contextualise the disagreements between Gan and Dissanayake further, and to position Chan's achievements more accurately, it is useful to make a few comments here regarding the conventions of the contemporary Hong Kong gangster genre. Since the late 1980s, following the huge success of John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (1986), Hong Kong gangster films have been transformed into a hybrid genre that was completely dependent on 'the depiction of urban cool'.[50] Barbara Mennel has traced the emergence of a hybrid "hero cycle" that has integrated modern Hong Kong's scenery, the convention of American gangster film, and the excessive use of violent gun fighting that was normally combined with martial arts choreography and urban aesthetics.[51] According to Mennel, this contemporary hybrid gangster genre not only offers conventionalised over-violent drama that centres on a male hero, it also works through social anxieties resulting from Hong Kong's handover to China.[52]

Within these parameters, it is reasonable to categorise *The Longest Summer* as belonging to the genre described by Mennel because the film is structured around the urban setting of contemporary Hong Kong gangsters' lives and the violent gun fights associated with gang activity and the representations of social anxiety. However, the urban settings in *Summer* tend to focus on the shabby, chaotic and order living areas of the lower social class. Compared to the deliberately glamorised urban setting in *A Better Tomorrow* or the *Young and Dangerous* series, Chan's settings emphasise the dilapidated urban underbelly of Hong Kong. And not only do they give the film a sense of greater reality, his protagonists are also more authentically conceived than stylised

heroes such as Mark in *A Better Tomorrow* and Chan Ho-nam in *Young and Dangerous*.

Although some critics hailed Chan's 'mutually animating juxtaposition of realism and fantasy'[53], on its initial release *The Longest Summer* failed at the local box office. According to Natalia Chan Sui-hung, the revenues could not cover the film's production costs and it lost US$250,000.[54] This failure may be explained by Hong Kong audiences losing interest in Chan's idiosyncratic style and uncompromising commitment to social realism. Another reason may have been the economic slump in Hong Kong in 1998 and the ensuing financial crisis that brought the Hong Kong film industry to its lowest point (see Chapter One). In addition, the film did not achieve much recognition at the 1999 Hong Kong Film Awards, nor was it a notable success at the international film festivals. In contrast to *Made in Hong Kong*'s distribution and exhibition range, we can clearly see that the decline faced by the Hong Kong film industry in Southeast Asia following 1998 had huge repercussions on *The Longest Summer*. In 1999, *Summer* only managed a release in a limited number of European countries such as Germany, the Czech Republic and France. At the same time, the film had not been sold anywhere in Southeast Asia and by 2000, only Taiwan and Japan had taken the film on theatrical release.[55] Although *The Longest Summer* was not commercially and critically lauded to the same extent as *Made in Hong Kong*, the film once again demonstrates Chan's ability of 'bypassing traditional commercial paths'[56] in understanding the spirit of the times in both filmmaking technique and film content.

Little Cheung **(1999)**

In 1999, Chan directed his third independent film, *Little Cheung*, which was released in Hong Kong at the end of December 1999 and completed the director's handover trilogy.[57] According to Wendy Gan, *Little Cheung* 'marks a distinct change in Chan's filmic direction: it is more intimate, more documentary-like and less focused on telling a story and more interested in a wholehearted immersion in the local cultures of Hong Kong'.[58]

The film was shot on locations around Portland Street in Kowloon district, which is notorious for prostitution, illegal immigration, triads and Mahjong clubs. The film is

rather sparse and plain in its mise-en-scène, which provides the perfect background for Chan to pursue a realistic vision of social problems that are wholly divergent from his other post-1997 trilogy films. One of the crucial aspects of this film is the pivotal role played by *Cha chan teng* (literally translated "tea restaurant") culture. *Cha chan teng* is more than just a place to eat and drink and is deeply rooted in the local Hong Kongers' daily lives. They form a social cornerstone in the lives of the lower classes. By focusing on the *Cha chan teng*, Fruit Chan is defining not just the locale but most importantly the cultural level of the film. It is necessary to first look at *Little Cheung*'s story outline in order to further understand how Fruit Chan immersed himself in the cultural representation of the film, concerning himself less with the film's narrative construction.

The film opens with a close-up of a TV set, which is showing a Cantonese opera[59] featuring the legendary Tang Wing-cheung (aka Sun Ma Sze Tsang), which invites viewers to interpret a sense of memory and nostalgia towards traditional Hong Kong culture. Similar shots constantly reappear in different sections of the film with different characters that Tang performed. Later we find out that the grandmother (Chu Sun-yau) of Little Cheung (Yiu Yuet-ming), the central character of this film, passionately adores Cantonese opera and Tang Wing-cheung's performances in particular. These scenes function as connections between past and present and also emphasise the significant role that traditional culture plays among the lower social classes. Little Cheung is a nine-year old street-smart Hong Kong boy whose parents own a *Cha chan teng*. Working after school and delivering takeaways expose Little Cheung to social ugliness, which manifests itself in triad activities, prostitution, gambling and illegal immigration. By capturing these social realities, Chan presents different, but authentic aspects of local Hong Kong culture. Later in the film, the *Cha chan teng* serves as the location for Little Cheung to meet his later friend, Ah Fan (Mak Wai-fan), a nine year old girl who has illegally immigrated to Hong Kong and is working as a child laborer. Fruit Chan uses Little Cheung and Ah Fan's developing friendship and joint adventures to reflect the local working-class's cultural existence and, as Szeto Kin-yan has suggested, to 'pose

identity questions for a new generation regarding kinship, nationalism and belonging during Hong Kong's historical and political transition of sovereignty in 1997'.[60]

At the time Fruit Chan was planning *Little Cheung* he had lost his local financial backing, resulting from the commercial failure of *The Longest Summer*. As mentioned above, Chan found the financial backers for *Little Cheung* not in the local industry, but in Japan and South Korea.[61] The role of the Pusan Promotion Plan in particular is worth investigating further, since, as has been noted by Davis and Yeh,[62] the function of film festivals has 'moved beyond their traditional role as gatekeepers of the art of cinema and ventured onto a new international field of transactions in film co-production, investment, promotion and exhibition'.[63]

Established in 1996, the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF) has developed into one of the most vibrant and influential film festivals in showcasing current trends in Asian cinema; its trademark Pusan Promotion Plan (PPP) was officially launched in 1998.[64] It serves as a pre-market where promising filmmakers and producers can meet with potential co-producers and financiers and, in turn, investors and co-producers can peruse a diverse selection of the latest Asian projects of top quality.[65] In 1998 Chan took his project scheme for *Little Cheung* to Pusan for series of one-to-one meetings with potential financiers. At the time the Hong Kong film industry was suffering from a shortage of financial sponsors (see Chapter One) and PPP undoubtedly provided much needed financial security to filmmakers such as Chan. PPP has helped establish a remarkable trust and confidence in the expertise of filmmakers and investors,[66] which allows filmmakers to experiment more freely without the usual restraints of commercial considerations. Furthermore, it opens up opportunities for filmmakers to go beyond local distribution and exhibition and participate at the global level of circulation.

Although *Little Cheung* marks a distinct change in Fruit Chan's filmic direction, there are a number of continuities in this film in terms of the methods that Chan adopted in its production. Firstly, he once again cast non-professionals actors and conducted street searches in order to find a suitable child who could play Little Cheung. According to

film critic Jason Dow, when the actual shooting started, Chan insisted on telling the children how to act instead of allowing them to read the script.[67] The film once again proved his skill in handling a non-professional cast. Yiu Yuet-ming's performance as Little Cheung won Best New Performer at the 2000 Taiwan Golden Horse Film Festival.[68] Secondly, *Little Cheung* still explored the lower social class during the transitional period of Hong Kong, only this time from the viewpoint of children. Thirdly, Chan persisted in embodying a realist portrait of characters and authentic representation of the lower social strata's daily lives in the film. Made with a budget of less than HK$1 million,[69] *Little Cheung* proved that even with a low budget, Chan was capable of presenting another in-depth cultural "product". Shohini Chaudhuri has commended the film as one of the best examples of the 'pan-Asian youth film'.[70]

Its initial box office receipts did not seem particularly promising when *Little Cheung* had its theatrical release in Hong Kong.[71] At the 2000 Hong Kong Film Awards, the film was nominated for 7 awards, which included Best Picture, Best Screenplay and Best Film Editing. Commenting on the film's showing at the 2000 Hong Kong International Film Festival, film critic Shelly Kracier wrote:

> With a brilliant style and subject, and a nuanced, subtly balanced political subtext, director Fruit Chan's *Little Cheung* was the most impressive Hong Kong film on display at the 2000 Hong Kong International Film Festival.[72]

Yet despite such acclaim, the film did not win a single award domestically. Internationally, on the other hand, *Little Cheung* quickly won acclaim, receiving the Silver Leopard New Cinema award at the 2000 Locarno International Film Festival.[73] From its coverage in the press at the time, it is clear that the film fulfilled expectations among Western audiences of an art-house hit. Critics hailed it as 'a realist, documentary-style tale of the bittersweet adventures and mysteries of childhood in which the comic and the tragic are smoothly interwoven'.[74] The film was also selected by the Toronto Film Festival, the London Film Festival and the Gijón International Film Festival in Spain, where it was awarded Best Art Direction.[75] It also had a theatrical run

in other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, while success in France further solidified the communication between Chan and European-based film production and distribution companies.

***Durian Durian* (2000)**

Chan's next film, *Durian Durian* (2000), subtly moved his concentration on presenting the realities of Hong Kong society during the transitional period to exploring the complicated relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong following the handover, and the film articulates this relationship both thematically and artistically. Wendy Gan has suggested that:

> *Durian Durian* is…a key film in [Fruit] Chan's oeuvre because it is the film in which, while continuing to draw heavily on the social realist tradition in Hong Kong cinema he [Chan] begins to move this tradition onto new ground through an engagement with social realism as practiced by the Sixth Generation Chinese filmmakers.[76]

The film focuses on Mainland immigrant Yan (Qin Hailu), who works in Hong Kong as a prostitute. A sub-plot centres on the encounter between Yan and Ah Fan (Mak Wai-fan), the young girl who illegally immigrated to Hong Kong in *Little Cheung*. Because of this recurrent character, some scholars like Yingjin Zhang have read this film as a sequel to *Little Cheung*.[77] It is necessary to point out, however, that even before *Durian Durian*, one may to a greater or lesser extent find intertextual connections between the narratives of Chan's films. For instance, in the final scene of *Little Cheung*, Little Cheung is anxiously looking for Ah Fan through the ambulance's window, but instead sees the characters Moon, Sylvester and Ping who appeared in *Made in Hong Kong*.

Durian is set both in Portland Street, Mongkok in Hong Kong and the north-eastern border region of Mainland China. From Chan's perspective, Portland Street is an ideal place to capture the social ugliness hidden beneath Hong Kong society. Even the film's title is a metaphor to deliver his message. As Chan has explained in an interview:

> The durian is a very strange tropical fruit. People either love it or hate it. Just as people are entranced or repulsed by Portland Street and its inhabitants.[78]

Portland Street is used as a microcosm through which to examine Mainland China and Hong Kong's being bound together. Yan and Fan appear to "seemingly" fit into an imagined community in post-1997 Hong Kong. Prior to *Durian*, a number of Hong Kong films centred on the portrayal of the experience that Mainland immigrants undergo in Hong Kong. *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (dir. Peter Chan Ho-sung, 1996) and independent feature *Love Will Tear Us Apart* (dir. Nelson Yuk Lik-wai, 1999) are both set primarily in Hong Kong and depict Hong Kong's ambivalence to the Mainland outsiders. Chan's *Durian*, in contrast, attempts to capture the essence of the Mainlander's life back in the Mainland after having been to Hong Kong.

Many scholars regard *Durian* as one of the most serious filmic attempts to deal with the relationship between Mainland China and Hong Kong, one that challenges dominant notions of Chinese nationhood.[79] Wendy Gan has proposed that the film 'begins the task of imagining what "one country" may mean, in reality, particularly in spatial and affective terms'[80]. According to her, *Durian Durian* achieves this new imagining by rewriting 'the binary opposition usually posed between the two [Hong Kong and Mainland China] into a contiguous relationship of kinship in times of change'.[81]

Prior to *Durian*, most Hong Kong films that featured prostitutes were firmly popular entertainment pictures, examples include, *Girl without Tomorrow* (dir. David Lam Tak-luk, 1988), *Intruder* (dir. Tsang Kan-cheung, 1997), *PR Girls* (dir. Matt Chow Hoi-kwong, 1998) and *One Night in Mongkok* (dir. Derek Yee Tung-shing, 2004). All of these films depict aspects of prostitution in an explicit manner; however, commercial priorities tend to restrain directors from engaging too deeply in assessing prostitution as a social problem. In the case of *Durian*, the topic is presented with much greater authenticity. Gan notes that before Chan started to shoot the film, he observed closely the Mainland prostitutes who were working in Mongkok, and through this close observation was able to create *Durian* in a style that realistically represents the everyday

life of a Mainland prostitute's life in Hong Kong.[82] In order to further convey a sense of realism, Chan deploys documentary techniques such as neutral background lighting and extensive use of hand-held cameras, and in a similar manner, the employment of non-professional actors. He spent more than three months in looking for the right person to play Yan. Qin Hailu was still only an undergraduate studying at The Central Academy of Drama with no acting experience when Chan decided to employ her in the role of Yan.

Film critic Shelly Kraicer has suggested that *Durian* has the most defined formal structure of all of Chan's works.[83] Specific film techniques reinforce the contrasts between Hong Kong and Mainland China: where hot and crowded Tsimshatsui in Hong Kong is filmed in bright, vivid colours and close-ups using non-stationary hand-held cameras; cold and deserted Heilongjiang in north-eastern China is filmed with a still camera using longer shots and with a de-saturated, muted and controlled palette.[84] Such contrasts, in Kraicer's opinion, are designed to emphasise the difference between the old-fashioned undeveloped Mainland city and the fast-paced rhythm of frenetic Hong Kong.[85]

As has been previously noted, Chan managed to secure financial backing from outside Hong Kong to support *Durian*'s production, via the European-based film sales company Wild Bunch.[86] Other involved companies included Nicetop Independent (Chan's own film production company), Des Films (France) and Studio Canal France.[87] Overall the budget for the film remained fairly low, costing less than HK$1 million.[88] Domestically, the film was not successful, with disappointing box office receipts of HK$523,015.[89] This financial failure contrasted sharply with film's domestic and international critical acclaim. Shelly Kraicer hailed *Durian Durian* alongside *In the Mood for Love* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2000), *Yi Yi: A One and a Two* (dir. Edward Yang, 2000) and *Platform* (dir. Jia Zhangke, 2000) as among the strongest films in Chinese language cinema in recent times.[90] Kraicer also had special praise for Qin's performance, rating it as 'simply astonishing, negotiating the gap between a surprisingly dignified, unshakably

confident Mongkok prostitute on the one hand, and a re-constructed, newly independent woman determined to slip out from the constricting social structures of her hometown on the other, with a dizzying aplomb that would be surprising even in an actress with years of experience behind her.'[91] Qin's performance of Yan won her Best Actress at the 2001 Hong Kong Film Awards and the 2001 Taiwan Golden Horse Film Festival. Other awards that Chan received for *Durian* included Best Original Screenplay and Best Picture at the 2001 Taiwan Golden Horse Film Festival, Best Screenplay at the 2001 Hong Kong Film Awards and Best Film at the 2001 Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards.[92]

The cross-border finance that *Durian* attracted assisted the film's access to global distribution. Before the film was officially released in Hong Kong, it was circulated in several international film festivals, including the 2000 Venice Film Festival in Italy, where Chan was nominated for Best Film (Golden Lion), the 2000 Toronto Film Festival in Canada and the 2000 London Film Festival in UK. Later in 2001, the film was seen by viewers at the Rotterdam International Film Festival in the Netherlands and the New Directors and New Films Festival in New York, United States.[93] However, in Southeast Asian regions, the film was only exhibited in Japan and Malaysia in 2002 and the Philippines in 2004.[94] In terms of worldwide distribution and exhibition, *Durian* met less demand than Wong's *In the Mood for Love*. This contrast may suggest that Chan's oeuvre and/or his public persona as an auteur is insufficiently cosmopolitan to reach world cinema audiences.

***Hollywood, Hong Kong* (2001) and *Public Toilet* (2002)**

Hollywood, Hong Kong and *Public Toilet,* released in 2001 and 2002, became the second and the third installments in Chan's Prostitute Trilogy after *Durian Durian*. Commenting on the critical acclaim of *Durian,* and his attitude towards his future career, Chan said:

> Since responses to *Durian Durian* were quite positive, perhaps it is assumed that I have

found my direction. Quite the contrary, the last thing I want is to become pigeonholed as a certain type of director.[95]

Hollywood, Hong Kong's central protagonist is Mainland prostitute Tong Tong/ Hung Hung (Zhou Xun), who devastates the lives of the family of Mr. Chu (Glen Chin) and Wong Chi-keung (Wong You-nam) who live in a Hong Kong shantytown, overshadowed by a large apartment block and shopping mall complex called Plaza Hollywood. Pin-chia Feng has argued in her analysis of the film that through the character of Tong Tong/Hung Hung, Chan was reimagining the figure of the *femme fatale* from Hollywood's film noir.[96] Commenting on the character's enigmatic presence in the film, her motives and desire to go to Hollywood, Bono Lee has suggested in a similar vein that 'this vagueness, this departure from the realistic depiction of social ills is deliberate, and is an exercise in Fruit Chan's latest stylistic experimentation'[97]. Despite the sense of artistic experimentation, the film was still grounded in authentic experience. The story, according to Bryan Chang, was inspired by a similar incident reported in a local newspaper in which an under-aged prostitute from Mainland China performed confidence tricks or "scams" on local citizens.[98]

However, while *Durian Durian* provides a realistic portrait of how a young Mainlander becomes a prostitute on her arrival in Hong Kong, and the problems she encounters, *Hollywood, Hong Kong* explores the cultural influence - Mainland China has on Hong Kong with what Derek Elley's review of the film in *Variety* described as 'a bizarre meld of the magical, mirthful and macabre'.[99] The film's setting is similar to that of Chan's previous films: the typically dark backstreets of Hong Kong. But compared with the more sparse and realistic look of his earlier films, in this case the design was more deliberately artificial, as Chan explained in an interview:

I also tried to infuse the setting with a rusty hue, to give it a harsh metallic feel. The art direction concentrated on overlaying patches of colour on a rust-colour backdrop, to symbolise the paradoxical demise and vitality of Tai Hom Village.[100]

In addition, for the first time, Chan employed a professional actor, Zhou Xun from Mainland China, to play Tong Tong/ Hung Hung. Interestingly, for a Mainland actor playing a Mainland protagonist in the film, Zhou Xun was required to speak Cantonese for almost the whole film. Arguably Chan intended to present how much more globalised Mainlanders have become, as the film shows how Tong Tong makes a success of living in Hong Kong and eventually fulfills her dream of starting a new life in Hollywood. Wendy Gan has argued that by introducing America as a theme into the film, Chan intended to remind the viewer of Hong Kong's global connections and attempts to extend any negotiations of identity within a global context.[101]

As with his previous films, Chan found financial backing from a range of international sources, with distribution participation from Hakuhido (Japan), Media Suits (Japan), Movement Pictures (France) and Capitol Films (UK), and shooting commenced in the summer of 2000.[102] *Hollywood, Hong Kong* was well received internationally, gaining six awards and nineteen nominations at various local and international film festivals. Continuing the increasing globalisation of Chan's work, his 2002 production *Public Toilet* included many locations that encompassed apart from Hong Kong, Beijing, India, South Korea and New York. Whilst the "world" of *Hollywood, Hong Kong* consisted solely of Hong Kong, Mainland China and (albeit only implicitly) America, in *Public Toilet*, a diverse multinational spectrum is brought to the screen. Susan Morrison argues that the film 'transcends traditional boundaries and barriers of geography, race and language'.[103] Digital video was used by Chan as a way of presenting a multiculturalised and intertwined world characterised by a vulgar, ugly, perplexing and uncertain atmosphere. Jason Dow claims that the digital filmmaking methods adopted by Chan to make the film were encouraged by their popularity among young filmmakers in Hong Kong at the time'.[104] Moving beyond Hong Kong is a notable thematic development at this stage of Chan's filmmaking. The film deals with the various adventures that the protagonists Dong Dong (Tsuyoshi Abe), Tony (Ma Zhe), Kim (Hyuk Jang), Cho (Inseong Jo), Jo (Jo Kuk) and Sam (Sam Lee Chan-sam), who are all from different ethnic backgrounds, endure on a journey in search of a miracle cure for their dying

friends and relatives. Dow gives a detailed description of how the film's idea developed: Chan started to conceive of this film while he was shooting *Durian Durian* in Northern China; through his experience in a local public toilet, he discovered that one had to chew gum to block the bad taste in your mouth resulting from the atrocious smell in the toilet; to Chan, this subject matter was intriguing, and consequently decided to make a film about public toilets.[105]

The film's experimental surrealism and "distasteful" subject matter pushed the boundaries of taste. For instance, the beginning of the film reveals how one of the central characters of the film, Dong Dong, was found abandoned in a public toilet as a newborn infant and was rescued by an old woman who later adopts Dong Dong. The digital camera zooms in and follows the old woman's hand into the pit of the public toilet as it pulls the baby (quite obviously a plastic doll) out of the pit. Later, several scenes feature urine and faeces from public toilets being flushed into rivers in which people swim. Then we are confronted in Korea with a mysterious "ocean girl" who enjoys residing in the septic tank of a portable toilet.

Public Toilet was made in collaboration between Chan's Nicetop Independent film production company and KTB Entertainment from Korea. Input to the film was mainly from Hong Kong in terms of the film's director, screen writers (Fruit Chan and Lam Kee-to) and cinematographers (Wah-chuen Lam and Man-wan Wong), in addition its international sales were also handled by the local company Golden Network Asia. Interestingly, however, *Public Toilet* was entered at the Toronto Film Festival as a 'Korean film'.[106] The film was also screened at the Venice Film Festival, Vancouver, Pusan, Split, Rotterdam, Istanbul, the Zlin Film Festival (Czech Republic) and Cinemanila Film Festival (Philippines).[107]

Compared with his previous films, *Public Toilet* received a number of negative reviews in the West. Christoph Huber's verdict in the online film journal *Senses of Cinema* was that '[Fruit] Chan seemed to have embarked on a mission to prove the DV detractors

right - *Public Toilet* looks, a few bold experiments notwithstanding, shoddy, messy, ugly, patched together.'[108] Writing in *Variety*, David Stratton wrote: 'whatever international interest there might be in a film obsessed with the most basic bodily functions is likely to be mitigated by the sheer visual ugliness of Hong Kong helmer [sic] Fruit Chan's first DV-shot feature.'[109] The film's thematic exploration is still constructed through youth's perspective as in many of Chan's previous films, albeit that some may claim it is not entirely clear what Fruit Chan was trying to do in this film and the film does not appear to offer a social critique.[110]

Three…Extremes (2004) and *Dumplings* (2004): Posing a Transnational/Translocal "Cultural Exhibitionism"

Following *Public Toilet*, Chan put independent filmmaking to one side and entered the world of commercial filmmaking with *Dumplings* (2004). Such a notable transition is perhaps largely due to Chan's collaboration with prolific Hong Kong filmmaker Peter Chan Ho-sun. *Dumplings* originated as one-third of the pan-Asian omnibus horror film *Three…Extremes* (dir. Miike Takashi, Kim Kee-woon, Fruit Chan, 2004) and was expanded into the feature length film *Dumplings* later on. Both films were produced by Peter Chan's company Applause Pictures, whose initiative has been to invest in local film directors to make high quality commercial art films in order to revitalise the local film industry and cultivate new niche markets for Hong Kong films. After Applause Pictures was founded in 2000, it has soon developed into one of the key representative film production companies in Hong Kong by producing films that 'show commitment to trans-border co-productions with local talent and new twists on genre'[111]. *Three…Extremes* has been the focal point of much critical discussion within the burgeoning field of the study of transnational cinema.[112] These discussions mainly focus on how the film is the 'outcome of a genuinely multinational collaboration'[113] bringing together three high profile directors in a similar manner to *Three* (dir. Nonzee Nimibutr, Kim Kee-woon, Peter Chan Ho-sun, 2002), a preceding East Asian collaboration.[114]

Three…Extremes consists of three short films, *Box*, *Cut* and *Dumplings*, from three different directors (Miike Takashi, Kim Kee-woon and Fruit Chan), from different countries (Japan, Korea and Hong Kong) and with distinctly different styles. The film subsequently grossed over HK$9 million worldwide.[115] What is significant is that *Three…Extremes* proposed a possible way of making a new type of pan-Asian film that can transcend the distinctiveness of culture and language among these different territories, and the film's use of the horror genre seems to be the key.[116] Differentiating itself from the Hollywood style of horror, *Three…Extremes* embraces J-horror (Japanese horror) genre, with a Korean macabre psychological twist and 'a new type of "C-horror" [Chinese horror]'[117] that Chan's contribution represents. To conclude, *Three…Extremes* represents a new form of Hong Kong cinema that is able to re-claim the local market by embracing talent, culture and genres in a way that transcends the local level. In this regard, it was most probably the collaboration between Fruit Chan and Peter Chan that encouraged Fruit Chan to experiment with his idiosyncratic style in a more commercial manner of filmmaking when it came to extending *Dumplings* into a feature length film. In the following section, I will discuss in more detail how *Dumplings* exemplified Chan's change from independent to commercial filmmaking and yet at the same time it still exhibited Chan's distinctive cinematic style.

Set in contemporary Hong Kong, *Dumplings* marks many continuities in Chan's oeuvre, which has previously dealt with both thematic and cinematic "extremes". The film tells a story that centres on a particularly warped and horrid form of cannibalism. Former TV actress Mrs. Li (Miriam Yeung Chin-wah) is searching for a way to obtain eternal youth in order to save her marriage that is in jeopardy as a result of her husband's affair with a younger and more attractive masseuse (Pauline Lau). Mrs. Li is referred to a Mainland immigrant actress turned back street doctor Mei (Bai Ling) who makes "special" dumplings made from aborted fetuses, which reputedly can restore youth. After eating several servings of the dumplings, Mrs. Li regains her beauty and youthful looks.

However, the dumplings also produce unpleasant side effects. Mrs. Li's body starts to emit a fishy smell and develop rashes. Mrs. Li calls Mei and argues with Mei over the phone whilst being overheard by Mr. Li (Tony Leung Ka-fai). Curious Mr. Li pays a visit to Mei and feels physically attracted towards her. After having sex with Mei, Mr. Li shockingly discovers that she is actually 64 years old. Presumably Mei has been eating dumplings to maintain her youth. The film ends with Mei fleeing back to Mainland China initiating a police investigation. Mrs. Li pays her husband's pregnant masseuse a visit and persuades her to abort her child in return for a large sum of money and after obtaining the aborted embryo of her husband's child, Mrs. Li begins to cook her own dumplings.

There are several notable aspects in this film's production. Firstly, *Dumplings* was industry-financed with Hong Kong-based Applause Pictures funding and producing the film. Applause Pictures was formed by Thai-Chinese writer-director-producer Peter Chan Ho-sun, the entrepreneur behind the UFO film group in Hong Kong (see Chapter One).[118] According to Davis and Yeh, Applause's strategy has been 'to invest in local Asian movies and directors capable of making commercial art films'[119] and 'to repackage genre pictures to stimulate new interests in popular forms'[120]. Therefore the aim was for *Dumplings* to be made into a commercial art film for mainstream audiences. In order to provide box office attractions for this film, mega star Tony Leung Ka-fai, Mainland actress Bai Ling and pop idol Miriam Yeung Chin-wah were casted as the film's central characters. Christopher Doyle was contracted as the film's cinematographer. Secondly, Chan moved from his usual concerns with Hong Kong's lower class to focus on middle class social phenomena, in this instance, adultery. In Hong Kong cinema, the subject of adultery has been commonly portrayed by directors in drama or the comedy genre dealing with middle class social experience. The traditional premise in these films is that only relatively wealthy men prove attractive to younger women. Different from Chan's earlier films which were mostly based on original screenplays, the film's plot was adapted from Chinese novelist Lilian Lee's

short story *Dumplings*, which concentrates solely on the women and how they strive to retain their beauty. As noted by Jason Dow, it was Fruit Chan who added the character of middle class businessman Mr. Li into the film.[121] According to Dow, this decision aided in strengthening the film's critique of social injustice and inequities between men and women among the middle class that is considered to be 'a high percentage social group in contemporary Hong Kong society'.[122]

Thirdly, strictly speaking, even though the film falls into the category of commercial entertainment, Chan was still encouraged to experiment with genre filmmaking in a different direction. He used the tension and cultural conflict that still existed in reality between Mainland China and Hong Kong following the handover as an allegory when unfolding the film's story. In addition, he incorporated black humour, psychological twists and rather gross cannibalisms to create a new form of horror film. Davis and Yeh have argued that this new treatment of horror resulted in Chan attaining several film awards in Hong Kong and Taiwan.[123] Fourthly, narrating a story that centres on the traditional Chinese dish of dumplings, the film established a cultural recognition factor among domestic audiences, but also, helped to boost the film's cultural appeal in the international film market. It is perhaps necessary to note here that traditional Chinese food, cookery and Chinese's eating habits are among the favourite subjects for contemporary Hong Kong filmmakers to explore. Examples include, the slapstick comedy *God of Cookery* (dir. Stephen Chow Sing Chi, 1996), *In the Mood for Love* (dir. Wong Kar-wai, 2004) and *Rice Rhapsody* (dir. Kenneth Bi, 2004), which deals with the Chinese diaspora in Singapore. Food in these films serves as a cinematic reenactment of identity and reflecting nostalgia. Therefore, it may not be at all coincidental that the handover triggers a desire among Hong Kong filmmakers' to search out traditional Chinese culture and interpret that culture with their individual perspectives. It is precisely in the context of these representations that the subject and style of *Dumplings* comes across as both subversive and unusual.

Dumplings achieved a much wider distribution range compared to Fruit Chan's previous films. The dissemination strategy still mainly relied on exhibition at various international film festivals. The film was screened at events in Australia, Finland and Uruguay in 2005 and 2006. It launched its theatrical run in Israel and its TV premiere in Estonia in 2006 and 2007.[124] However the local market was still one of this film's main targets and as pointed out by Derek Elley, prior to *Three…Extremes*'s screening at the Venice and Pusan film festivals, *Dumplings* was released in Hong Kong in mid-August in 2004, where it grossed an impressive HK$6 million.[125]

It was the commercial success of the film that perhaps encouraged Chan to carry on making films following a similar route, as after *Dumplings*, Chan embarked on yet another pan-Asian omnibus film, *Chengdu, I Love You* (2009), where he collaborated with Mainland rock singer-turned-director Cui Jian and Korean filmmaker Jin-ho Hur, although the latter's contribution never made it into the final film.[126] The three episodes were supposed to embody snapshots of urban life in the city of Chengdu at different historical periods, with Chan directing a segment set in 1976 following a major earthquake. Screened as an incomplete version at the 2009 Venice Film Festival, the film was widely panned, with *Variety*'s Derek Elley calling it 'unmarketable', and finding Cui Jan's Matrix-inspired sci-fi sketch 'laughingly inept' and 'chaotic', but at least finding something good to say about Chan's episode in calling it a 'slim but well made/played vignette'.[127] Funded and distributed by Mainland company Zonbo Media and Distant Horizon (South Africa), the film sank without trace and proved that not all pan-Asian omnibus films could repeat the success of Chan's earlier collaborative effort. Distant Horizon also funded the paranormal horror *Don't Look Up* (2009),[128] a remake of Hideo Nakata's 1996 J-horror film. Set in Romania, it was shot mostly at Universal Studios in Hollywood and featured US director/actor Eli Roth, notorious for his *Hostel* horror films, in a brief supporting role. *Don't Look Up* marked Chan's English-language debut, working with a largely American cast and crew (with the notable exception of Hong Kong cinematographer Hang-sang Poon, who also shot Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu*

Hustle). Although it appears that the producers attempted to promote the film on the basis of Chan's reputation as a horror filmmaker owing to *Three…Extremes*, the film was a financial flop and was very badly received critically, being mostly dismissed as unoriginal and boring. Given these latter developments, it seems plausible to say that Fruit Chan's filmmaking career appears to have come to a halt at this point, and that his unique vision is beginning to become lost within mainstream projects. Whether this is a result of personal choice or the direction in which the Hong Kong film industry has developed since 1997 remains difficult to conclude, however, it is undeniable that the 1997 handover has certainly opened up more opportunities in terms of co-operation and integration between Hong Kong and Mainland film industries and film markets, which has directly influenced the level of co-productions for pan-Asian cinema. In these circumstances, changing filmmaking strategies and styles is perhaps inevitable. Nonetheless, we should perhaps remember Wendy Gan's assessment that 'Fruit Chan's career trajectory demonstrates that he is an auteur willing to reinvent himself, constantly exploring new styles, new modes and new means of film production'.[129]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delineated Fruit Chan's filmmaking trajectory from the outset. By reading his films, it reveals Chan as having been one of the most important cinematic commentators on the meaning of Hong Kong and Chinese identity after 1997 and that he has drawn attention to it through exploration of the predicament of the lower classes in Hong Kong society. He has consistently achieved this through a variety of cinematic styles, whether for instance, deploying neo-realist techniques or reinventing Surrealism or indulging in enigmatic fantasy. In addition, pushing the stylistic and thematic boundaries into new extremes appears to be one of Chan's major intentions. But Chan's career is important not just for his individual style and themes, but also for being representative of new directions within the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. During Hong Kong's political transition, the economy was unstable due to

financial crisis and the future of Hong Kong cinema was consequently considered to be at risk. The success of *Made in Hong Kong* highlighted new possibilities for alternative filmmaking. The independent methods adopted by Fruit Chan served to encourage more film directors and new talent to follow in his footsteps in the making of independent films. Up until and including *Public Toilet*, Chan has managed to continue his independent filmmaking experiments, however as suggested by Wendy Gan, he seemed to 'move away from his familiar Hong Kong roots'[130] to further his search for identity into a wider geographical context including Mainland China, Korea, India and America.[131] Perhaps this is down to the impact of the increased frequency of collaboration in terms of film production, distribution and exhibition between Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Europe, and Hong Kong and Hollywood since the handover, which has motivated Fruit Chan in his desire to capture global concepts in his films.

Stephen Chow's *Shaolin Soccer* (2001) and *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) achieved huge success in Mainland China. Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000) and *2046* (2004) benefited from a marketing campaign involving a series of theatrical runs in the Mainland film markets. However, due to sensitive themes and extreme filmic styles, Chan's films were never officially shown in Mainland China, not even his 2009 film *Chengdu, I Love You,* which received financial backing from the Mainland. Perhaps the next obvious, though potentially challenging, step for Chan might be to break with his films into the Mainland, in line with Wendy Gan's prediction that the Hong Kong film industry 'has been keen to seek greater economic convergence with the Mainland film market'.[132] It should be pointed out that, at the time of writing, Chan seems to have found a way of tapping into the Mainland market. However, the apparent irony lies in the fact that he had to step down from his directorial position in so doing and assume the role of producer. This was evidenced by two romantic comedies produced by Chan, namely *Hot Summer Days* (dir. Tony Chan and Wing Shya, 2010) and its sequel *Love in Space* (dir. Tony Chan and Wing Shya, 2011) that generated reasonable box office

revenues in the Mainland[133] with star-studded casts including pop idols Jacky Cheung, Nicholas Tse, Shawn Yue, Angelababy, Aaron Kwok, Eason Chan, and Kwai Lun-mei. There are no documented texts explaining why Chan stepped down from his directorial position but it could simply be, as he admitted in an interview, that he did not want to 'become pigeonholed'[134] and taking up the producer's role perhaps provided a completely new direction in terms of filmmaking for Chan to experience. Whatever the reason, we should not be surprised to see Chan moving to the next dimension, as it is entirely in keeping with his consistently evolutionary approach.

Notes

[1] Tony Rayns, 'Made in Hong Kong: Hong Kong 1997', in *Sight and Sound*, no. 8, August 1999, pp. 47-48.
[2] Tony Rayns, 'Made in Hong Kong: Hong Kong 1997', p. 48.
[3] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2007), p. 136.
[4] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 23.
[5] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 23.
[6] Most of film scholars considered *Public Toilet* a part of Fruit Chan's prostitute anthology, but I believe this film should be studied separately in terms of its narrative and filmmaking methods.
[7] David Stratton, '*Public Toilet*', in *Variety*, October 21- October 27, 2002, p. 40.
[8] Tony Rayns, 'Dumplings', in *Sight and Sound*, vol. XVI, Issue 7, July 2005, p. 53.
[9] Derek Elley, "Dumplings', in *Variety*, vol. CCCXCVI, Issue 13, November 15 2004, p. 49.
[10] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 5.
[11] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 20.
[12] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 5.
[13] Edward L. Davies, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Chinese Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 102.
[14] Esther Cheung, 'Built Space, Cinema, and the Ghostly Global City', in *International Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 1, 2005, pp. 711-718.
[15] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[16] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 269.
[17] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[18] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films'.
[19] Ruby Cheung Wai-yee, *Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002: The Quest for Identity during Transition*, PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2008, p. 261.
[20] Natalia Chan Sui-hung, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Fruit Chan's 1997 Trilogy', in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds.), *Italian Neoralism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), p. 216.
[21] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[22] Tony Rayns, '*Made in Hong Kong*: Hong Kong 1997', in *Sight and Sound*, no. 8, August 1999, pp. 47-48.

[23] Cha Chuen-yee was awarded "Films of Merit" for *Once upon a Time in Triad Society II*, by the 1996 Hong Kong Film Critic Society, http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117242, accessed 14 August 2009.
[24] Ruby Cheung Wai-yee, *Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002: The Quest for Identity during Transition*, PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2008, p. 262.
[25] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[26] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 21.
[27] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 21.
[28] Tony Rayns, '*Made in Hong Kong*: Hong Kong 1997', in *Sight and Sound*, no. 8, August 1999, p. 47.
[29] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0123328/awards, accessed 12 August 2009.
[30] Nicetop Independent Limited was established by Fruit Chan in 1996, http://www.haf.org.hk/haf/pdf/project08/se24.pdf, accessed 12 August 2009.
[31] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0123328/releaseinfo, accessed 12 August 2009.
[32] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 5.
[33] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2007), pp. 133-148; see also Natalia Chan Sui-hung, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Fruit Chan's 1997 Trilogy', in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds.), *Italian Neoralism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), pp. 207-224.
[34] Natalia Chan Sui-hung, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Fruit Chan's 1997 Trilogy', in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds.), *Italian Neoralism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), p. 216.
[35] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2007), p. 138.
[36] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape: Contemporary Chinese Cinema*, p. 136.
[37] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape*, p. 136.
[38] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape*, p. 136.
[39] Gary G. Xu, *Sinascape*, p. 136.
[40] Shumei Shi, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific* (California: University of California Press, 2007), p. 155.
[41] Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', in *Metro: Media & Education Magazine*, vol. 146/147, 2005, pp. 101-102.
[42] Shumei Shi, *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific* (California: University of California Press, 2007), p. 155.
[43] http://www.haf.org.hk/haf/pdf/project08/se24.pdf, accessed 12 August 2009.
[44] Mengyang Cui, *Hong Kong Cinema and the 1997 Return of the Colony to Mainland China: The Tensions and the Consequences* (Australia: Universal-Publishers, 2007), p. 51.
[45] Natalia Chan Sui-hung, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Fruit Chan's 1997 Trilogy', in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds.), *Italian Neoralism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), p. 223.
[46] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 21.
[47] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films', in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[48] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films'.
[49] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films'.
[50] Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 94.
[51] Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema*, p. 94.
[52] Barbara Mennel, *Cities and Cinema*, p. 94.
[53] Wimal Dissanayake, 'The Class Imaginary in Fruit Chan's Films, in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/FruitChan-class/text.html, accessed 12 August 2009.
[54] Natalia Chan Sui-hung, 'Hong Kong Cinema and Fruit Chan's 1997 Trilogy', in Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson (eds.), *Italian Neoralism and Global Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007), p. 225.
[55] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0189660/releaseinfo, accessed 12 August 2009.
[56] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 6.
[57] This information was collected from Hong Kong Film Archive in 2005 while I was carrying out

research there.
[58] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 22.
[59] Cantonese opera is one of the major categories in Chinese opera. It was originated in southern China's Cantonese culture and became extremely popular in Hong Kong in the 1950s.
[60] Szeto Kin-yan, 'The Politics of Historiography in Stephen Chow's *Kung Fu Hustle*,' in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 49, Spring 2007, http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/Szeto/3.html, accessed 15 August 2009.
[61] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 23.
[62] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 140.
[63] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 140.
[64] http://www.piff.org/eng/html/archive/arc_history03_01.asp, accessed 25 July 2009.
[65] http://ppp.asianfilmmarket.org/Template/Builder/00000001/page.asp?page_num=486, accessed 25 July 2009.
[66] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 148.
[67] Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', in *Metro: Media & Education Magazine*, vol. 146/147, 2005, p. 102.
[68] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0234116/awards, accessed 12 August 2009.
[69] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 269.
[70] Shohini Chaudhuri, *Contemporary World Cinema: Europe, the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 124.
[71] The information was collected from Hong Kong Film Archive.
[72] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/littlecheung.html, accessed 22 July 2009.
[73] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0234116/awards, accessed 12 August 2009.
[74] Natasha Senjanovic, '*Little Cheung*', in *Screen Daily*,10 August 2000, http://www.screendaily.com/little-cheung-xilu-xiang/403267.article, accessed 19 June 2007.
[75] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0234116/awards, accessed 12 August 2009; see also http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0234116/releaseinfo, accessed 12 August 2009.
[76] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 26.
[77] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 269.
[78] http://www.goldenscene.com/durian/reviews.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[79] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 3; see also Chris Berry, 'A Nation T(w/o)o: Chinese Cinema(s) and Nationhood(s)', in Wimal Dissayake (ed.), *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 53.
[80] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 10.
[81] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 10.
[82] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 38.
[83] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[84] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[85] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[86] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 23.
[87] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[88] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 269.
[89] The data was collected at Hong Kong Film Archive.
[90] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[91] http://www.chinesecinemas.org/durian.html, accessed 19 June 2009.
[92] Sen-lun Yu, 'China's filmmakers invade Taiwan', in *Taipei Times*, 09 December 2001, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/archives/2001/12/09/0000115103, accessed 10 July 2009; see also http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0255327/awards, accessed 19 June 2009.
[93] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0255327/awards, accessed 19 June 2009.
[94] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0255327/awards, accessed 19 June 2009.
[95] Bryan Chang, 'Hollywood Hong Kong: Fruit Chan's Heaven and Hell', in *Hong Kong Panorama 2001-2002* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 2002), p. 87.
[96] Pin-chia Feng, 'Reimagining the *Femme Fatale*: Gender and Nation in Fruit Chan's *Hollywood Hong Kong*', in Esther M. K. Chueng, Gina Marchetti and Tan See-kam (eds.), *Hong Kong Screenscapes: From the New Wave to the Digital Frontier* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), pp. 253-262.
[97] Bono Lee, 'The Fantasy of Vulgar Men', in *Hong Kong Panorama 2001-2002* (Hong Kong: Urban

Council, 2002), p. 89.
[98] Bryan Chang, 'Hollywood Hong Kong: Fruit Chan's Heaven and Hell', in *Hong Kong Panorama 2001-2002* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 2002), p. 87.
[99] Derek Elley, 'Hollywood, Hong Kong', in *Variety*, September 3-September 9, 2001, p. 43.
[100] Bryan Chang, 'Hollywood Hong Kong: Fruit Chan's Heaven and Hell', in *Hong Kong Panorama 2001-2002* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 2002), p. 87.
[101] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 88.
[102] Derek Elley, 'Hollywood, Hong Kong', in *Variety*, September 3-September 9, 2001, p. 43.
[103] Susan Morrison, 'Fruit Chan's "Excremental Vision"', in *Cineaction*, vol. 61, 2003, p. 68.
[104] Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', in *Metro: Media & Education Magazine*, vol. 146/147, 2005, p. 103.
[105] Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', p. 103.
[106] Susan Morrison, 'Fruit Chan's "Excremental Vision"', in *Cineaction*, vol. 61, 2003, p. 68.
[107] David Stratton, 'Public Toilet', p. 40; see also http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0334229/releaseinfo, accessed 20 August 2009.
[108] Christoph Huber, 'Curious about Crap: Fruit Chan's *Public Toilet* (2002)', in *Senses of Cinema*, no. 24, Jan-Feb 2003, http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/24/toilet.html, accessed 08 September 2009.
[109] David Stratton, '*Public Toilet*', in *Variety*, October 21- October 27, 2002, p. 40.
[110] Susan Morrison, 'Fruit Chan's "Excremental Vision"', in *Cineaction*, vol. 61, 2003, p. 67.
[111] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 94.
[112] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), pp. 95-97; see also David Rooney, 'Three…Extremes', in *Variety*, October 11-October 17, 2004, p. 58; see also Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', in *Metro: Media&Education Magazine*, vol. 146/147, 2005, p. 103.
[113] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 95.
[114] David Rooney, '*Three…Extremes*', in *Variety*, vol. 396, Issue 8, October 11-October 17 2004, p. 58.
[115] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 96.
[116] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 95.
[117] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 95.
[118] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 94.
[119] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 94.
[120] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries*, p. 94.
[121] Jason Dow, 'Fruit Chan: "Unique is Very Important to Me"', in *Metro: Media & Education Magazine*, vol. 146/147, 2005, p. 100.
[122] Zhaojia Lin and Hsin-chi Kuan, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese* (Beijing: Chinese University Press, 1988), p. 66-67.
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[125] Derek Elley, '*Dumplings*', in *Variety*, vol. CCCXCVI, Issue 13, November 15 2004, p. 49.
[126] Derek Elley, '*Chengdu, I Love You*', in *Variety*, September 14 2009, http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117941081/, accessed 14 March 2012.
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[131] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian*, p. 95.
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Conclusions

The subject of this thesis is a study of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema in the light of the momentous 1997 handover that officially ended the British colonial rule of Hong Kong. This transition attracted a great deal of academic interest, covering many aspects of the cinematic manifestation of Hong Kong cinema as it entered into a new era of Chinese rule. Most of the interest has been focused on re-defining the concept of "national cinema" in the context of Hong Kong's transitional political status, and discussing the shifting cinematic representation of local identity, social structure, cultural divergence and political conversion through an analysis of various film genres and leading filmmakers. However, many of the attempts at quantifying the effects of the handover on the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema seem to lack emphasis and specific examination. Therefore, throughout this thesis I have focused mainly on an examination of the industrial development of Hong Kong cinema within a period starting from the political transition year of 1997 through to the present, with attention being given to the posing of questions relating to the extent to which the political transition has influenced the filmmaking trajectories of the chosen prominent figures in Hong Kong cinema. In pursuit of the answers to these questions, attention was specifically given to examination of the filmmaking practices that these chosen prominent figures embraced, and the distribution and exhibition patterns adopted by the films that were made by these prominent figures in order to conclude whether they had been shaped directly by the political handover or by other factors. This attention is particularly important given that some film scholars have suggested Hong Kong cinema and its industry have been experiencing a crisis as a direct result of the 1997 political transformation.

The thesis is structured into five main sections in its aim to investigate its central argument. In order to achieve this, the introductory chapter covered the existing scholarly work on Hong Kong cinema. In addition, while the chapter largely engages in a discussion of the existing work, it also provides a study of the historical development of Hong Kong cinema, spanning the four decades immediately preceding the political transition. This study of the lead-in period provides the historical context for the research and a point of comparison

from which to assess the influence of the handover in the post-1997 era. Stephen Teo's *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*, Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover's *City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema* and David Bordwell's *Planet Hong Kong Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* have been primary texts studied and analysed in this chapter, as these scholarly works not only offer an in-depth discussion of the cinema's historical development, they also contribute specific studies of the cinema's leading studios, representative individuals, and contexts. In *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions*, Stephen Teo traces Hong Kong's cinematic history from its beginnings through to its New Wave and on to early 1990s' postmodernism,[1] while David Bordwell's *Planet Hong Kong* assesses Hong Kong's popular filmmaking practices. It provides detailed analyses and surveys of the popular filmmaking industry's background, its production practices, the filmic structures and styles of the films, and its representative figures.[2] In *City on Fire*, Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover approach the Hong Kong film industry primarily from the political and economical perspective in order to analyse its perceived position of 'crisis'.[3]

It is obvious that the development of Hong Kong cinema has always maintained a deep association with the development of cinema in Mainland China. This is evident not only by the fact that in pre- and post-war periods a large number of film producers and artists migrated to Hong Kong from Shanghai, initiating innovative Mandarin cinema genres that present distinct critical social viewpoints and nostalgic ambience, but also by the fact that Chinese culture (for example history, Chinese opera, literature) has always played an important role in shaping the contexts of Hong Kong cinema. The industry experienced its boom period in terms of film production from the 1950s to the 1960s. This is mainly attributed to two major production and distribution studios, MP&GI (Motion Picture and General Investment) and Shaw Brothers, which were established and active during that period.

These two film studios developed effective production methods similar to Hollywood's, which were contract-based, director-oriented, and employing professionally-standardised technical production methods.[4] The studios attracted an abundance of investment from

within the local region, particularly Southeast Asia. However, they also established fierce competition in occupying local and regional markets, especially the markets in Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. As a result, Hong Kong cinema faced a huge demand in these regions. By this time Hong Kong had become a well-established production and distribution centre in Southeast Asia. In the 1970s the Hong Kong film industry concentrated primarily on producing kung fu films, which established Hong Kong cinema's international recognition. However, the industry also experienced an abrupt decline due to the impact of the Cultural Revolution in Mainland China: the annual number of feature productions reached dramatically low rates and Mandarin cinema ceased its production.

From the end of the 1970s to the early 1990s, Hong Kong cinema entered the phase of the New Wave. On the one hand, this meant that commercial filmmaking more or less still dominated the Hong Kong film industry and the studio system continued as before. On the other hand, established genres were innovated by a group of young filmmakers, who entered the industry following television experience. Mostly educated in overseas film schools, these new filmmakers brought with them new perspectives, techniques and styles that established a new status for Hong Kong in international art cinema.

Assessing the influence of the handover on the industrial development of Hong Kong cinema post-1997 is difficult due to a number of other factors including: the Asian financial crisis, the SARS pandemic, the influence of Hollywood, increasing globalisation, video (and now DVD) piracy, to name a few. Consequently, in order for Chapter One to assess the impact of 1997 effectively, the chapter follows a series of hypotheses that have been proposed in the introduction.

The first hypothesis is meant to respond to those film scholars who have argued that the Hong Kong film industry is in a state of crisis resulting directly from the 1997 transition. In contrast, throughout my thesis I aim to show that the decline experienced by Hong Kong cinema cannot simply be attributed as being a direct result of the transition. All available evidence in fact indicates that the Hong Kong film industry had already shown a weakness prior to the handover. This weakness had multiple causes, including Hollywood's

dominance of the local film markets, the financial decline of major production houses, shortage of investment, the industry's poorly performing production system, and VCDs/DVDs piracy. The industry's problems post-1997 were compounded by ongoing piracy, the Asian financial crisis, shrinking consumer demand due to the SARS pandemic, the continuing domination of the local markets by Hollywood blockbusters, and the loss of veteran filmmakers and actors like John Woo, Jackie Chan and Chow Yun-fat to Hollywood. All these factors indicate that it is too simplistic to view the decline of the Hong Kong film industry as being only a result of the political transition.

The second hypothesis argued that post-1997 Hong Kong cinema has engaged in a reconstruction in response to the challenges it faces. One aspect of this reconstruction is the fact that more Hong Kong films are intentionally made as "Hollywoodised" blockbusters in order to compete with major US studios in the local markets. Another aspect of the reconstruction is the gradual rise of independent filmmakers and production companies, leading the development of Hong Kong cinema. These filmmakers and companies have managed to sustain a consistent output of high quality films. Their films represent new forms of trans-regional capital flow, partially benefitting from the film policies introduced by the government of HKSAR since the handover, such as FILMART, FDF, HAF and 'Hong Kong Film: New Action'. These films have often achieved high box office grosses, but moreover, new localised forms of film genres have been created, along with an aspiration to find a niche within the networks and distribution channels of global art cinema. In this respect, contemporary Hong Kong cinema has managed to successfully tap into major international markets including the US, with the result that some filmmakers have moved on to Hollywood.

My third hypothesis considers that a more profound influence of the 1997 handover lies in the way that political change has encouraged Hong Kong filmmakers to re-evaluate the connections between Hong Kong and the Mainland. This has taken the form of exploring the social consequences of new government regulations, the cultural conflicts between Hong Kongers and migrated Mainlanders, and the new phenomenon of reverse migration i.e. Hong Kongers moving to Mainland China. One specific, and potentially productive,

consequence of the handover, as suggested by my fourth hypothesis, is that the boundaries of economic interaction between Hong Kong and Mainland China have become more fluid as a result of the implementation of CEPA. One obvious benefit for the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema is that under the implemented terms of CEPA, if films are co-produced by Hong Kong and Mainland entities, they are exempt from the Mainland foreign film quota, which means that they can enjoy unrestricted access to the Mainland market. In addition, CEPA also permitted Hong Kong companies to establish wholly-owned distribution companies in the Mainland. This has not only facilitated increasing collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland in terms of co-productions, talent exchange, and financial backing, it has also opened up more opportunities for both lands' film markets to interact at the distribution stage. Since 1997 Hong Kong filmmakers have begun to consider very seriously how to break into the lucrative Mainland markets, and thus more Hong Kong films are featuring content that is targeted at Mainland audiences. However, there is also an underlying drawback to this in the fact that sometimes Hong Kong filmmakers have had to compromise, for instance by having to alter or abandon certain themes or plots originally conceived for their films in order to pass the strict censorship regulations in the Mainland. One could argue that this ultimately lays obstacles in the path of creativity for Hong Kong filmmakers.

Post-1997 Hong Kong cinema also witnesses more frequent collaboration with Southeast Asia, Europe and Hollywood in terms of production, distribution and exhibition compared to pre-1997. This has resulted in new forms of filmmaking that embrace translocal/transregional/transnational talent, culture and genres. Consequently, these new forms of Hong Kong films have cultivated new niche markets at the local and the international level. In this regard, Hong Kong cinema since 1997 has re-emerged to become one of the most influential in the world. Film scholars Law Kar and Frank Bren believe that post-1997 Hong Kong cinema 'had been accepted in the international market as a legitimate provider of mass-appeal action products and high-end art films'.[5] This observation, as suggested by my fifth hypothesis, can be argued as being a "benefit" of the 1997 transition but it could also be argued as being a side product of globalisation. In my opinion it is a combination of the two as the 1997 handover certainly did not appear to

restrict the increasing level of globalisation within the industry and yet it did offer the opportunity for increased collaboration with the Mainland, as previously explained.

In order to examine these five hypotheses in concerted detail, individual filmmakers Stephen Chow Sing Chi, Wong Kar-wai and Fruit Chan were examined as case studies in Chapters Two, Three and Four. These three filmmakers were chosen for the range in terms of their style, genres and their representative status in the development of post-1997 Hong Kong cinema. For the three filmmakers, a comparison of their filmmaking methods in terms of production, exhibition and distribution between the pre-1997 period and the post-1997 period was constructed in each of the chapters in order to demonstrate the extent to which their filmmaking was influenced by the handover.

Chapter Two looks at actor/director/producer Stephen Chow, a unique personality in Hong Kong film history, who has not only perfected the comedy subgenre of *mo lei-tau*[6] but who is also a box-office phenomenon. Chow's pre-1997 career illustrates how deeply-rooted within the local his filmmaking is. Chow's *mo lei-tau* style of performance had already begun to gather considerable audiences when he was hosting a children's programme on local television. His typical style of humour, which specialises in 'improvised wisecracks and absurdist non-sequiturs and respects nothing',[7] can only fully be appreciated by Cantonese speakers. Between 1990 and 1996, Chow's films continuously achieved high-level box office records even when Hollywood blockbusters had largely overtaken the local productions with their high box office revenues.[8] Most of these films, including the ones that were directed and produced by Chow himself, utilised local resources, funds and talents, allying with local major production and distribution companies such as GH and Win's Entertainment Ltd. for the films' production and local distribution. Themes in these films owed their origins to a mixture of Hollywood classics and Chinese culture, as Chow borrowed heavily from both those sources. However, most of these films only enjoyed local popularity.

In the post-1997 period, Chow's status as box office magnet does not appear to have been affected by the political transition or the economic downturn. In fact, Chow's status appears

to have transcended from local, across regional to finally achieve global popularity. This is evidenced by the facts that in 1999, his feature release *King of Comedy* topped the local box office chart; in 2000 his *mo lei-tau* kung fu sports comedy *Shaolin Soccer* grossed HK$60.7 million and broke all records in Hong Kong; but even the records set by *Shaolin Soccer* were soon surpassed by Chow's 2004 martial arts comedy *Kung Fu Hustle*. Although *Shaolin Soccer* is considered to be a Hong Kong made picture, the film garnered both talent and resources from Mainland China. Unfortunately the film suffered a ban when planned for release on the Mainland, for reasons which mainly lay in vigorous censorship through the auspices of the State Administration for Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) institutes. The reason for the ban, according to Klein, was because Chow failed to ask SARFT's permission to use the name of Shaolin Temple,[9] alternatively it could have been that the film's title might have offended Buddhists in the Mainland, as Bordwell explains it.[10] *Kung Fu Hustle* on the other hand demonstrated Chow's intention of catering the film for the Mainland Chinese audience and his determination of breaking into the Mainland market, as at this point Chow perhaps realised that tapping into the Mainland market is a necessary step to take for his film to achieve global popularity. By collaborating with Mainland-based media groups, the film not only received financial support, it was also guaranteed unrestricted access to the Mainland market, as the Mainland film groups acted as the eyes of Mainland censorship in order to avoid any potentially adverse situations that could have led to rejection from SARFT. It perhaps then needs to be pointed out that without the handover and the implementation of CEPA, collaboration with the Mainland and access to the Mainland market would have been far less possible. *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle* best exemplify the post-1997 Hong Kong cinema's creative reconstruction of a new global system encompassing financial aspects, film creation, and marketing strategies as they took Hong Kong cinema to what scholars Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yuen-yu have described as 'a new level of finesse'.[11]

Chapter Three compares Wong Kar-wai's filmmaking in the pre-1997 period with that of the post-1997 period, and argues that the status of Wong as the 'most artistically adventurous director'[12] in Hong Kong cinema has remained unchanged by the transition. However, Wong's filmic style post-1997 and the production methods that he adopted to

make these films, nevertheless reveal a strong influence by the political transition. The point can be illustrated by his 1997 released gay film *Happy Together*, which was regarded as an initial response to the uncertainty surrounding the ending of Hong Kong's colonial status following its handover to China in 1997, as an outcome of which Wong relocated his entire filmmaking machinery to Argentina for the production of the film. The stories for Wong's next two projects *In the Mood for Love* and *2046* were conceived to denote 'a new beginning' that could pertain to the relationship between Hong Kong and Mainland China post-1997.[13] The two films' distribution strategy indicates that Wong had also set his eyes on the Mainland film market due to the two films receiving a high level of exposure in terms of their marketing promotion in Mainland China. This considerably altered the previous situation when none of Wong's films were officially released into Mainland markets pre-1997. Nevertheless, entering the Mainland market proved to be an obstacle even for high profile film directors like Wong Kar-wai. Wong's original plan to film in Beijing while addressing the theme of Hong Kong in fifty-year's time following its handover, was too sensitive to be portrayed in the eyes of the authorities of the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT). Wong had also possibly shown no intention of collaborating with domestic film studios in Mainland China. As a result, Wong had to take production to Macau where the story eventually evolved into *In the Mood for Love*, a portrayal of an ambiguous relationship between a married man and a married woman set in 1960's Hong Kong. Perhaps learning from the difficulty encountered when making *In the Mood for Love*, Wong's next film *2046* by comparison had a strong Mainland dimension in terms of funding, acting and location shooting. In fact, this film is an exemplary transnational collaboration as it was shot in various locations like Thailand, Mainland China, Macau and Hong Kong, and the investment for the film came from various regions and countries such as Japan, Hong Kong, Mainland China, France and Italy. In 2007, Wong exported his unique Hong Kong art-house filmic style and showmanship even further onto the global stage with his Hollywood independent debut *My Blueberry Nights*, featuring Hollywood A-list stars Jude Law, Rachel Weisz and Natalie Portman. This film certainly consolidated Wong's auteuristic status at the international level and one could argue Wong's filmmaking journey to eventually arriving in the west is strongly motivated by the political handover in every step that he has taken since 1997.

Fruit Chan's filmmaking trajectory discussed in Chapter Four illustrates an obvious change of direction in terms of genre filmmaking. Following his previous social realistic or surrealistic fantasy art-house genre films, Chan switched his filmmaking to the mainstream genres of horror and love romance. Ever since *Made in Hong Kong* achieved successful critical acclaim both locally and internationally, Chan has continued to engage in his films with 1997 handover themes such as the exploration of identity crisis inherent in Hong Kong-ness, the social problems faced by Hong Kong lower classes after the political transition, and the cultural conflicts and psychological barriers between Mainlanders and Hong Kongers. Chan's independent filmmaking methods included his search for funding from a variety of sources, local and cross border, and employing non-professional actors in his films.

Chan's industry-financed horror feature *Dumplings* (2004) marked a decisive shift, and although the film still dealt with the 1997 handover theme, its horror format and the casting of popular stars and professional actors attracted a massive new interest from mainstream audiences. Such shift can be attributed to the collaboration between Fruit Chan and the prolific Hong Kong filmmaker Peter Chan Ho-sun, as *Dumplings* was expanded into a feature length film from being one-third of the worldwide distributed omnibus horror feature *Three…Extremes* (dir. Miike Takashi, Kim Kee-woon, Fruit Chan, 2004). Both films were produced by Peter Chan's Hong Kong-based production company Applause Pictures. The company's initiative was to invest in local film directors to make high quality commercial art films in order to revitalise the local film industry and to cultivate new niche markets for Hong Kong films. *Three…Extremes* pointed a possible way forward for the making of a new type of pan-Asian film that could transcend cultural and language barriers. It is regarded as being 'one of the best examples of pan-Asian cinema in the field'.[14] The commercial success of *Three…Extremes* and *Dumplings* perhaps encouraged Fruit Chan to carry on making films following the pan-Asia mode. Chan's filmmaking career was then taken onto the international stage, like that of Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, when he directed his first English-language feature, a Hollywood studio-funded horror film *Don't Look Up* (2009). However, this remake of Hideo Nakata's 1996 J-horror film failed to

please audiences and critics when it was released in America. Perhaps because of this failure, Chan's filmmaking career came to a halt. However Chan soon appeared to take a different direction in continuing his "experiments" in filmmaking circles when basing them in Mainland China. He stepped down from being a film director to take up the role of producer. The two Hong Kong-Mainland co-productions, produced by Chan, namely *Hot Summer Days* (dir. Tony Chan and Wing Shya, 2010), and its sequel *Love in Space* (dir. Tony Chan and Wing Shya, 2011), generated very reasonable box office revenues in the Mainland. The commercial success of these two romantic comedies indeed offered Chan a route to continue making films by utilising capital, resources and talents from Hong Kong and the Mainland. In this regard, it is perhaps safe to say that this route might have proved more difficult if Hong Kong had not officially returned to the PRC.

As Hong Kong cinema is now in the second decade since the handover, it finds itself in a situation where even more locally-based Hong Kong filmmakers have repositioned their filmmaking bases to Mainland China. Johnnie To, who is well known for singularly devoting himself to making Hong Kong films for the local audience, released his first Mandarin film *Linger* in 2008.[15] This romantic drama gathered financial backing from Mainland China and Hong Kong with a cast list that included pop stars and veteran actors from Hong Kong, Mainland China and Taiwan.[16] Gordon Chan Ka-seung also tapped into the burgeoning Mainland market with the release of his pan-Asian blockbuster *Painted Skin* (2008). This supernatural fantasy kung fu feature was adapted from one of the stories in the classic Chinese Literature *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* written by Pu Songling. At the time of submitting this thesis, Chan's recent pan-Asian production, a sci-fi *wu xia* feature *The Four* (2012), loosely based on the renowned Malaysia-born Chinese novelist Wen Rui-an's popular novel, surprised critics by climbing to top position at the Mainland box office having generated RMB 69,162,500 (around $11 million) in just one week following its first screening in mid-July this year.[17] In addition Jeffrey Lau Chun-wai, who has long been associated with Stephen Chow and Wong Kar-wai, also released two Mandarin Chinese-language films in 2009 and 2010: *Kung Fu Cyborg* and *Once Upon a Chinese Classic*. We have also seen some signs of a reversal of the westward exodus of veteran filmmakers like John Woo, who returned from Hollywood in 2008 to make his epic

Mandarin Chinese-language film, *Red Cliff*, the most expensive Asian-financed film to date.[18]

Such seemingly encouraging successes have to be set against more cautious assessment of these new developments. Film historian Laikwan Pang for instance, has argued that Hong Kong has been transformed largely into a film financing centre geared towards attracting international investment and can no longer be identified according to traditional cultural definitions of local cinema.[19] As has been argued previously however, such traditional definitions of the local themselves may need challenging. Although filmmakers such as Johnnie To, John Woo, Jeffrey Lau, Wong Kar-wai, Stephen Chow and Fruit Chan went beyond the local and started to make films elsewhere (Mainland China, Europe, Hollywood), their films are still very much identified as Hong Kong films.

The growing number of collaborations with Mainland China and successful Mainland market penetration on the part of Hong Kong films has undoubtedly "benefited" from political events (the 1997 handover) and economic contexts (the increasing flow of cross-border finance). However, it can also be argued that these are positive outcomes of the combined actions of individual film personnel and production companies and their devotion to reconstructing the infrastructure of the Hong Kong film industry. Conversely, some concern has been raised about the growing collaboration and market penetration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. For example, Chu Yiu-wai in examining the status of the co-productions between the two territories since the handover, argues that such development not only compromised the previously instantly recognisable identity represented by Hong Kong cinema, it also establishes an obstacle for the development of middle to small-budget productions.[20]

These arguments have valid points, it should not be overlooked however that Hong Kong's identity has always been difficult to define given Hong Kong's complex historical background and political status and its previous involvement in regional and global economic collaborations. It also may well be, that due to Mainland market conditions, collaborations with the Mainland have only proved feasible for big-budget films, however,

we also might need to consider the possibility that the growth of the Hong Kong film industry in this direction could also have been influenced by a determination on the part of the filmmakers to compete with Hollywood. It is also notable that a great many of the collaborations involving Hong Kong post-1997 are not with Mainland China but in fact involve other Asian regions. A number of these pan-Asian collaborations certainly do not fall into the category of big-budget productions and many of them exude a form of Asianisation that has little to do with the Mainland. This would tend to suggest that the changes referred to by Chu have less to do with the influence of the Mainland and more to do with the increasingly global nature of filmmaking. The numbers of these pan-Chinese/Asian films are still expanding on the global stage, but it remains to be seen exactly what role Hong Kong cinema will continue to play among the regions. Whatever that role is, one thing that can be predicted is that it will continue to be a major role. A cinema with the historical influence of Hong Kong's does not simply disappear into the ether. Whether Hong Kong's future is that of a funding base or a continuing source of creative inspiration, the concept of "Hong Kong films" will continue long after the concept of "films made in Hong Kong" has declined.

Notes

[1] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997).
[2] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000).
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[4] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute Press, 1997), p. 74.
[5] Law Kar and Frank Bren, *Hong Kong Cinema: A Cross-cultural View* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004), p. 294.
[6] Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 263.
[7] Leung Wing-fai, '*Infernal Affairs* and *Kung Fu Hustle*: Panacea, Placebo and Hong Kong Cinema', in Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-fai (eds.), *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connection on Film* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2008), p. 80.
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[9] Christina Klein, '*Kung Fu Hustle*: Transnational Production and the Global Chinese-language Film', in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2007, p. 193.
[10] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (second edition), online PDF version, http://www.davidbordwell.net/books/planethongkong.php, accessed 26 March 2011, p. 220.
[11] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 41.

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[13] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2005), p. 101.
[14] Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 93.
[15] Vivian P.Y.Lee, *Hong Kong Cinema Since 1997: The Post-Nostalgic Imagination* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 211.
[16] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1156136/, accessed 03 May 2010.
[17] http://www.chinesefilms.cn/141/2012/07/26/122s10941.htm, accessed 09 October 2012.
[18] Elizabeth Guider and Adam Dewtrey, 'Berlin Star Power Eclipses Click Pics', in *Variety*, February 17 2007, http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=features2007&content=jump&jump=story&dept=berlin&nav=NBerlin&articleid=VR1117959711&cs=1&query=Red+Cliff, accessed 03 May 2010.
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[20] Chu Yiu-wai, 'One Country Two Cultures? Post-1997 Hong Kong Cinema and Co-Productions', in Kam Louie (ed.), *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), pp. 131-145.

Appendices

Table 1: Total feature film investment (Hong Kong)

Source: David Hancock, *Global Film Production*, presented at Venice Conference, 29-30 August 1998, p. 28, www.obs.coe.int/oea_pub/eurocine/global_filmproduction.pdf.en, accessed in 2007.

Year	Total Investment $million (US dollar)
1995	151
1996	105
1997	61

Chart 1: Percentage of Hong Kong box-office takings, 1986-1996

Sources: Law Kar, 'Hong Kong Film Market and Trends in the 1980s', *Hong Kong Films in the 1980s* (Hong Kong: Urban Council Press, 1991), p. 70; see also Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Motion Picture Industry Association 1997.

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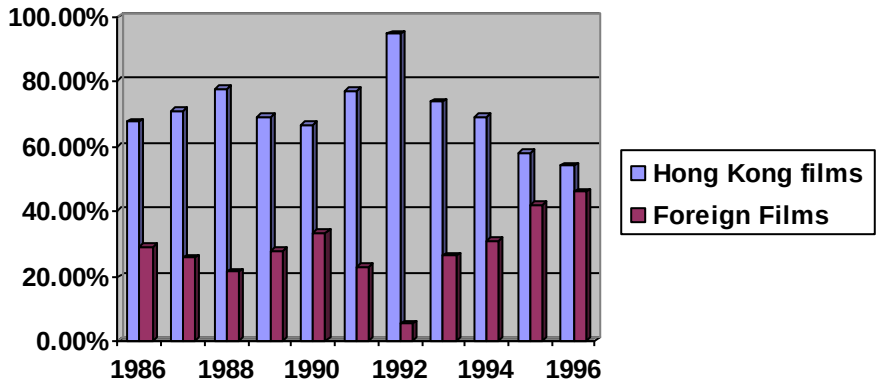

Table 2: Theater attendance in Hong Kong, 1977-1996

Sources: Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics; see also Hong Kong Motion Picture Industry Association online box office figures 1990-1996; see also Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 154.

Year	Theaters	Attendance (HK $million)
1977	75	60
1979	80	65
1982	89	66
1985	104	58
1988	133	66
1993	-	44
1995	-	28
1996	-	22

Chart 2: Annual number of feature productions in Hong Kong, 1970-2007

sources: Yingjin Zhang, *Chinese National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 155-156; see also Darrell William Davis and Emilie Yeh Yueh-yu, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute Press, 2008), p. 30; see also 2007 Hong Kong Yearbook, http://www.yearbook.gov.hk/2007/en/index.html, accessed 10 May 2009, p. 355.

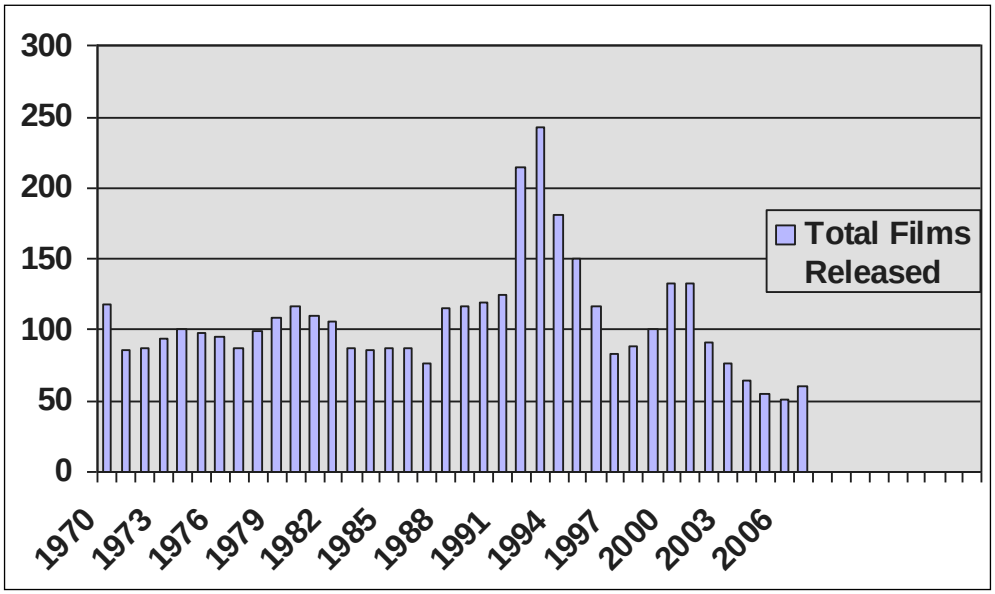

Chart 3: Percentage of Hollywood's box office share in Hong Kong, 1997-2007

sources: *City Entertainment* (1996-2005); see also Hong Kong Yearly Box Office (2006-2007), http://boxofficemojo.com/intl/hongkong/yearly/?yr=2006&p=.htm, http://boxofficemojo.com/intl/hongkong/yearly/?yr=2007&p=.htm, accessed 12 October 2008.

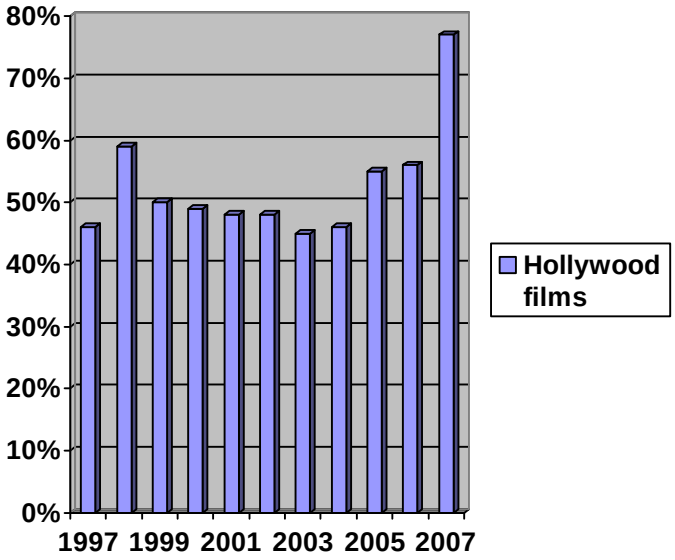

Table 3: Numbers of Screens, Firms and Employment of Hong Kong's Feature Film Industry 1998-2002

Sources: *Cinemas, Film Production & Distribution in China & Hong Kong: A Market Analysis* (Shanghai: Access Asia Limited, 2004), p. 23; see also China Contact from National Statistics.

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of Screens	188	189	192	178	n/a
Employment in the Industry	5129	5248	5535	6101	n/a
Number of Firms in the Industry	991	1100	1112	1130	n/a

Table 4: Annual number of Hong Kong-Mainland China co-productions and their Mainland box office receipts, 1997-2007

Sources: *Review of Hong Kong-Mainland China Co-Productions*, http://news.chinafilm.com/200707/0240280.html, accessed 05 November 2011; see also Xie Xiao and Chen Yiyi, *Understanding CEPA through Figures*, http://ent.people.com.cn/BIG5/8222/42057/43636/3135545.html, accessed 05 November 2011; see also Laikwan Pang, 'Postcolonial Hong Kong Cinema: Utilitarianism and (Trans)Local', in *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2007, p. 416; see also Zhou Xing and Zhao Jing, 'Exploration on The Relationship of Hong Kong Cinema and Chinese Cinema', in Zhang Jianyong and Zhang Wenyan (eds.) *Ten Years of Hong Kong Cinema* (Beijing: Chinese Cinema Press, 2007), p. 34.

Year	Annual Number	Box Office Receipts (RMB ¥billion)
1997	7	N/A
1998	7	N/A
1999	10	N/A
2000	6	N/A
2001	6	N/A
2002	13	N/A
2003	26	0.2
2004	32	0.6
2005	29	N/A
2006	40 (approximately)	N/A
2007 (until May)	22	N/A

Glossary

Names of individual personnel

English	Chinese
Aaron Kwok Fu-sing	郭富城
Alan Mak Siu-fai	麦兆辉
Alan Tang	邓光荣
Alex Law Kai-yui	罗启锐
Alfred Cheung Kin-ting	张坚庭
Allen Fung Yi-ching	冯意清
Amy Tam Ka-chuen	谭嘉荃
Andrew Lau Wai-keung	刘伟强
Andy Lau	刘德华
Ang Lee	李安
Angelababy	杨颖
Angelica Lee Sin-je	李心洁
Anita Mui	梅艳芳
Anita Yuen	袁咏仪
Ann Hui	许鞍华
Anthony Wong Chau-sang	黄秋生
Bai Ling	白灵
Benny Chan Muk-shing	陈木胜
Bobby Lam	林锡坚
Brian Tse	谢立文
Brigitte Lin Ching-hsia	林青霞
Bruce Law Chi-leung	罗志良
Bruce Lee	李小龙
Bruce Leung Siu-lung	梁小龙
Carina Lau	刘嘉玲

Cha Chuen-yee	查传谊
Chan Kwok-kuen (or Kwok-kuen Chan)	陈国坤
Chang Che	张彻
Chang Chen	张震
Chang Hsin-yen	张鑫炎
Chapman To Man-chak	杜汶泽
Chen Daoming	陈道明
Chen Keige	陈凯歌
Chen Kuo-fu	陈国富
Chi-chung Lam	林子聪
Chiu Chi Ling	赵志凌
Christopher Doyle	杜可风
Chu Sun-yau	朱瑞友
Chor Yuen	楚原
Chow Yun-fat	周润发
Clara Law	罗卓瑶
Clifton Ko Chi-sum	高志森
Corey Yuen Kawi	元奎
Cui Jian	崔健
Daniel Lee Yan-kong	李仁港
Danny Chan Kwok-kwan	陈国坤
Danny Lee Sau-yin	李修贤
Danny Pang Fat	彭发
Dante Lam	林超贤
David Chiang Da-wei	姜大卫
David Lam Tak-luk	林德禄
Derek Tsang Kwok-chung	曾国祥
Derek Yee Tung-sing/shing	尔东升

Dong Jie	董洁
Dong Zhi-hua	董志华
Donnie Yen	甄子丹
Eason Chan	陈奕迅
Edison Chan	陈冠希
Edmond Pang Ho-cheung	彭浩翔
Edward Yang	杨德昌
Eileen Chang	张爱玲
Ekin Cheung	郑伊健
Eric Tsang Chi-wai	曾志伟
Faye Wong	王菲
Feng Xiaogang	冯小刚
Frankie Chan	陈勋奇
Francis Ng	吴镇宇
Fruit Chan	陈果
Gigi Leung	梁咏琪
Glen Chin	陈英明
Gong Li	巩俐
Gordon Chan Kar/Ka-seung	陈嘉上
Gu Long	古龙
Hai Kit-wai	奚杰伟
Hang-sang Poon (or Peter Pang Hengsheng)	潘恒生
Hark Tsui	徐克
Herman Yau	邱礼涛
Hideo Nakata	中田秀夫
Ho Chao-chang	何兆璋
Hou Hsiao-hisen	侯孝贤
Hu Jun	胡军

Huang Jianxin	黄健新
Huang Shengyi (or Shengyi Huang)	黄圣依
Hui Shiu-hung	许绍雄
Huo Xin (or Xin Huo)	霍昕
Hyuk Jang	张赫
Inseong Jo	赵寅成
Ivy Ho	岸西
Isabella Leung Lok-sze	梁洛施
Jackie Chan	成龙
Jacky Cheung	张学友
Jay Chow	周杰伦
Jeffrey Lau Chun-wai	刘镇伟
Jet Li	李连杰
Jia Zhangke	贾樟柯
Jin-ho Hur	许秦豪
Jingle Ma Cho-shing	马楚成
Jo Koo/Kok or Kuk	谷祖琳
Joe Ma	马伟豪
Joey Wang/Wong	王祖贤
John Woo	吴宇森
Johnnie To	杜琪峰
Johnny Mak	麦当雄
Jordan Chan	陈小春
Josie Ho	许超仪
Karen Mok	莫文蔚
Karl Maka	麦嘉
Kelly Chen	陈慧琳
Kenneth Bi	毕国智

Kim Kee-woo (or Jee-woon)	金知云
King Hu	胡金铨
Kirk Wong	黄志强
Kwan Pung-leung	关本良
Kwong Chi-leung	邝志良
Lai Yiu-fai	黎耀辉
Lam Chi-chung (or Chi-chung Lam)	林子聪
Lam Kee-to	林纪陶
Lau Ching-wan	刘青云
Lee Kung-lok	李公乐
Lee Lik-chi	李力持
Leon Lai	黎明
Leonard Ho	何冠昌
Leslie Cheung	张国荣
Leung Siu-lung	梁小龙
Li Bihua	李碧华
Li Shaohong	李少红
Lilian Lee	李碧华
Liwen Ma	马俪文
Liu Kai-chi	廖启智
Lo Chi-leung	罗志良
Lok Wan-tho	陆运涛
Louis Koo	古天乐
Ma Zhe	马哲
Mable Cheung Yuen-ting	张婉婷
Maggie Cheung	张曼玉
Mak Wai-fan	麦惠芬
Manfred Wong	文隽

Man-keung Chan	陈文强
Man Tat Ng	吴孟达
Man-wan Wong	黄文云
Mark Li Ping-bing	李屏宾
Masayuki Suzuki	铃木雅之
Matt Chow Hoi-kwong	邹凯光
Michael Hui	许冠文
Michelle Lee	李嘉欣
Michelle Yeoh	杨紫琼
Miike Takashi	三池崇史
Miriam Yeung Chin-wah	杨千嬅
Neiky Yim Hui-chi	严栩慈
Nelson Yuk Lik-wai	余力为
Nicholas Cheung Ka-fai	张家辉
Nicholas Tse	谢霆锋
Nonie Tao	陶君薇
Oxide Pang Chun	彭顺
Parkman Wong	黄柏文
Patrick Tam	谭家明
Patrick Tse Yin	谢贤
Pauline Lau	刘宝琳
Peter Chan Ho-sun	陈可辛
Pu Songling	蒲松龄
Qin Hailu	秦海璐
Raymond Chow	邹文怀
Raymond Wong Pak-ming	黄百鸣
Rebecca Pan	潘迪华
Ringo Lam	林岭东

Run Run Shaw	邵逸夫
Sam Lee Chan-sam	李灿森
Sammi Cheung	郑秀文
Sammo Hung Kam-bo	洪金宝
Samson Chiu Leung-chun	赵良骏
Sandra Ng Kwan-yu	吴君如
Sharla Cheung	张敏
Shaw Zuiweng	邵醉翁
Shawn Yue	余文乐
Shirley Kwan	关淑怡
Shu Kei	舒琪
Shu Qi	舒淇
Simon Yam	任达华
Stanley Kwan	关锦鹏
Stanley Tong	唐季礼
Stephen Chow Sing Chi	周星驰
Su Li	苏里
Sylvia Chang	张艾嘉
Takeshi Kaneshiro	金城武
Tang Wing-cheung (or Sun Ma Sze Tsang)	邓永祥
Taylor Wong Tai-loi	黄泰来
Teddy Chan Tak-sum	陈德森
Teresa Mo	毛舜筠
Teresa Tang	邓丽君
Terry Tong Gei-ming	唐基明
Tiffany Lee	李笼怡
Toe Yuen	袁建滔
Tony Au	区丁平

Tony Chan	陈国辉
Tony Ching Siu-tung	程小东
Tony Ho Wah-chiu	何华超
Tony Leung Chiu-wai	梁朝伟
Tony Leung Kar/Ka-fai	梁嘉辉
Tsang Kan-cheong (or Kan-cheung Tsang)	曾谨昌
Tsuyoushi Abe	阿部力
Vicky Zhao Wei	赵薇
Vincent Kok	古德昭
Wah-chuen Lam	林华全
Wai Ka-fai	韦嘉辉
Wang Weiyi	王为一
Wen Rui-an	温瑞安
Wenders Li	李栋全
William Chang	张叔平
Wing Shya	夏永康
Wong Ching-po	黄精甫
Wong Jing	王晶
Wong Kar-wai	王家卫
Wong Yat-fei	黄一飞
Wong You-nam	黄又南
Wu Chengen	吴承恩
Xie Tieli	谢铁骊
Xu Jiao	徐娇
Yau Nai-hoi	游乃海
Yau Tat-chi	游达志
Yiu Yuet-ming	姚月明
Yo Yo Mung	蒙嘉慧

Yuan Muzhi	袁牧之
Yuen Qiu	元秋
Yuen Wah	元华
Yuen Wo-ping	袁和平
Zeng Jinchang	曾谨昌
Zhang Yimou	张艺谋
Zhang Ziyi	章子怡
Zheng Wei	韦正
Zhou Xuan	周璇
Zhou Xun	周迅

Film Titles

English	Chinese
2000 AD	公元 2000
2046	2046
72 Tenants Families	七十二家房客
92 Legendary La Rose	92 黑玫瑰对黑玫瑰
A Better Tomorrow	英雄本色
A Better Tomorrow II	英雄本色 II
A Brighter Summer Day	牯岭街少年杀人事件
A Chinese Ghost Story	倩女幽魂
A Chinese Odyssey	大话西游之月光宝盒
A Chinese Odyssey Part Two	大话西游之仙履奇缘
A Chinese Tall Story	情癫大圣
A Hero Never Dies	真心英雄
A Man Called Hero	中华英雄
A Moment of Romance	天若有情
A True Mob Story	龙在江湖
A Wedding Banquet	喜宴
A World without Thieves	天下无贼
Aces Go Places	最佳拍档
All about Ah Long	阿郎的故事
All for the Winner	赌圣
All's Well, End's Well	家有喜事
An All-Consuming Love	长相思
Anna Magdalena	安娜玛德莲娜
As Tears Go By	旺角卡门
Ashes of Time	东邪西毒
Au Revoir Mon Amour	何日君再来

A. V.	青春梦工场
Bangkok Dangerous	曼谷杀手
Beast Cops	野兽刑警
Beyond Our Ken	公主复仇记
Breaking News	大事件
Boat People	投奔怒海
Buddha's Palm	如来神掌
Buddha's Palm Strikes Again	如来神掌再战江湖
C'est la vie mon chéri	新不了情
Chengdu, I Love You	成都我爱你
Chinese Ghost Story	倩女幽魂
Chinese Odyssey: Cinderella	大话西游之大圣娶亲
Chinese Odyssey: Pandora's Box	大话西游之月光宝盒
Chungking Express	重庆森林
City Cop	公仆
City of Glass	玻璃之城
CJ 7	长江七号
Claustrophobia	亲密
Confession of Pain	伤城
Comrades, Almost a Love Story	甜蜜蜜
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	卧虎藏龙
Curry and Pepper	咖喱辣椒
Days of Being Wild	阿飞正传
Don't Look Up	不许向上看
Double Vision	双瞳
Dr. Lamb	羔羊医生
Drunken Master	醉拳
Dumplings	饺子

Durian Durian	榴莲飘飘
Echoes of Rainbow	岁月神偷
Eighteen Springs	半生缘
Eighth Happiness	八星报喜
Election	黑社会
Election II	黑社会之以和为贵
Enter the Dragon	龙争虎斗
Eros	爱神
E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial	外星人
Exiled	放逐
Face/Off	喋血双雄
Fallen Angels	堕落天使
Farewell, My Concubine	霸王别姬
Fight Back to School	逃学威龙
Final Justice	霹雳先锋
Final Victory	最后胜利
Finale in Blood	大闹广昌龙
Fist of Fury 1991	新精武门
Forbidden City Cop	大内密探零零发
From Beijing with Love	国产零零漆
Fu Bo	福伯
Full Time Killer	全职杀手
Game of Death	死亡游戏
Gameboy Kids	机 Boy 小子之真假威龙
Gigolo and Whore	舞男情未了
Girl without Tomorrow	应召女郎 1988
God of Cookery	食神
God of Gamblers	赌神

Going Home	三更之回家
Golden Chicken	金鸡
Golden Chicken II	金鸡 2
GTO	麻辣教师
Happy Ghosts	开心鬼撞鬼
Happy Together	春光乍泄
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	哈利波特与密室
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire	哈利波特与火焰杯
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	哈利波特与阿兹卡班的囚徒
Heat	盗火线
He's a Woman, She's a Man	金枝玉叶
Her Fatal Ways	表姐，你好嘢！
Hero	英雄
Heroic Duo	双雄
Hit Team	重装警察
Hollywood Hong Kong	香港有个好莱坞
Hot Summer Days	全城热恋
House of 72 Tenants	72 家房客
I am Liu Yuejin	我叫刘跃进
Inner Senses	异度空间
In the Mood for Love	花样年华
In the Name of the Shooting Star	逆转流星
Infernal Affairs	无间道
Infernal Affairs II	无间道 II
Infernal Affairs III	无间道之终极无间
Initial D	头文字 D
Intruder	恐怖鸡
Irma Vep	迷离劫

Isabella	伊莎贝拉
Jade Goddess of Mercy	玉观音
Jan Dara	晚娘
Jewel in the Palace	大长今
Ju Dou	菊豆
Justice, My Foot!	审死官
Jurassic Park	侏罗纪公园
King of Beggars	武状元苏乞儿
King of Comedy	喜剧之王
Knock Off	雷霆一击
Koma	救命
Kung Fu Cyborg	机器侠
Kung Fu Hustle	功夫
La Haine	怒火青春
Lawyer Lawyer	算死草
Legend of the Dragon	龙的传人
Legend of the Owl	猫头鹰
Linger	蝴蝶飞
Little Cheung	细路祥
Little Cop	小小小警察
Long Arm of the Law	省港骑兵
Look out Officer	师兄撞鬼
Looking back in Anger	义不容情
Love for All Seasons	百年好合
Love in Space	全球热恋
Love is Love	望夫成龙
Love on a Diet	瘦身男女
Lovers' Discourse	恋人絮语

Love Will Tear Us Apart	天上人间
Lung Fung Restaurant	龙凤茶楼
Mad Detective	神探
Made in Hong Kong	香港制造
Man on the Brink	边缘人
Man Suddenly in Black	大丈夫
Master Q 2001	老夫子 2001
McDull Wu Dang	麦兜响当当
Mean Streets	穷街陋巷
Miami Vice	迈阿密风云
Missing	深海寻人
Mission Impossible II	碟中谍 2
Moonlight Express	星月童话
Mr. Cinema	老港正传
Mr. Nice Guy	一个好人
My Blueberry Nights	我的蓝莓之夜
My Brother's Girlfriend	哥哥的女朋友
My Hero	一本漫画闯天涯
My Left Eye See Ghosts	我左眼见鬼
My Life as McDull	麦兜故事
My Lucky Stars	福星高照
Needing You	孤男寡女
New Police Story	新警察故事
Once Upon a Chinese Classic	越光宝盒
Once Upon a Time in China	黄飞鸿
Once Upon a Time in Triad Society	旺角揸 Fit 人
One Fine Spring Day	春逝
One Night in Mongkok	旺角黑夜

Ordinary Heroes	千言万语
Painted Skin	画皮
Palace of Desire	大明宫词
Para Para Sakura	浪漫樱花
Paycheck	记忆裂痕
Perhaps Love	如果·爱
Platform	站台
Police Story	警察的故事
PR Girls	青春援助交际
Princess Pearl	还珠格格
Project A	A 计划
Protégé	门徒
PTU	机动部队
Public Toilet	人民公厕
Purple Storm	紫雨风暴
Raise the Red Lantern	大红灯笼高高挂
Rebel without a Cause	无因的反抗
Red Cliff	赤壁
Red Sorghum	红高粱
Rich and Famous	江湖情
Rice Rhapsody	海南鸡饭
Ringu	午夜凶铃
Road Warriors	铁血骑警
Rob-B-Hood	宝贝计划
Rouge	胭脂扣
Royal Tramp	鹿鼎记
Royal Tramp II	鹿鼎记之神龙教
Rumble in the Bronx	红番区

Running on Karma	大只佬
Running out of Time	暗战
Running out of Time II	暗战 2
Savior of the Soul	九一神雕侠侣
Seven Swords	七剑
Seven Women	七女性
Shaolin Soccer	少林足球
Shanghai Noon	上海正午
She Shoots Straight	皇家女将
Sixty Million Dollar Man	百变星君
Sleazy Dizzy	小偷阿星
Song of the Exile	客途秋恨
Sparrow	文雀
Spirited Away	千与千寻
Strange Tales amongst the Old and Desolate Tomb	古墓荒斋
Street Angels	马路天使
Super Cop	超级警察
Tempting Heart	心动
Temptress Moon	风月
The Banquet	夜宴
The Bund	上海滩
The Big Boss	唐山大兄
The Boat People	投奔怒海
The Bride with the White Hair	白发魔女传
The Conmen in Vegas	赌侠大战拉斯维加斯
The Dark Knight	黑暗骑士
The Day after Tomorrow	后天
The Departed	无间行者

The Detective	C+侦探
The Eagle Shooting Heroes	东成西就
The Enigmatic Case	碧水寒山夺命金
The Eye	见鬼
The Eye II	见鬼 2
The Final Combat	盖世豪侠
The Flirting Scholar	唐伯虎点秋香
The Founding of a Republic	建国大业
The Four	四大名捕
The Godfather Trilogy	教父三部曲
The Greed of Man	大时代
The Harry Potter series	哈利波特系列
The Haunted Cop Shop	猛鬼学堂
The House of 72 Tenants	七十二家房客
The Journey of Life	生命之旅
The Justice of Life	他来自江湖
The Killer	喋血双雄
The Legend of Owl	猫头鹰
The Legend of Speed	烈火战车之极速传说
The Longest Summer	去年烟花特别多
The Lord of the Rings trilogy	指环王三部曲
The Marriage Certificate	谁说我不在乎
The Messengers	鬼使神差
The Matrix Reloaded	黑客帝国之重装上阵
The Matrix trilogy	黑客帝国三部曲
The Mission	枪火
The Shaolin Temple	少林寺
The Shining	闪灵

The Sopranos	黑道家族
The Spider-Man series	蜘蛛侠系列
The Star Wars series	星球大战系列
The Storm Riders	风云之雄霸天
The Sword	名剑
The Postmodern Life of My Aunt	姨妈的后现代生活
The Promise	无极
The Tricky Master	千王之王
The Warlords	投名状
Third Sister Liu	刘三姐
Three	三更
Three…Extremes	三更 2
Thunderbolt	霹雳火
Time and Tide	顺流逆流
Tokyo Rider	东京攻略
To Be Number One	跛豪
Too Many Ways to Be No.1	一个字头的诞生
Top Gun	壮志凌云
Triad Story	江湖最后一个大佬
Triangle	铁三角
Twins Effect	千机变
Van Helsing	范海辛
Visible Secret	幽灵人间
Way of the Dragon	猛龙过江
Wedding Banquet	喜宴
When Fortune Smiles	无敌幸运星
Windtalkers	风语者
Yellow Earth	黄土地

Yes, Madam	皇家师姐
Yi Yi: A One and a Two	一一
You Shoot, I Shoot	买凶拍人
Young and Dangerous	古惑仔
Young and Dangerous: The Prequel	新古惑仔之少年激斗篇
Zu: Warriors of the Magic Mountain	蜀山：新蜀山剑侠

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