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Thesis: Anchalee Chaiworaporn (2022) "Border Crossings and the Cinemas of Thai Arthouse Directors", University of Southampton, Film Studies Department, PhD Thesis, pagination.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF FILM

Border Crossings and the Cinemas of Thai Arthouse Directors

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2022

University of Southampton

Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Department of Film

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This thesis explores the global rise of a previously little-known film culture that has grown from an example of 'small nation cinema' oriented towards local consumption to become a part of the modern network of world cinema, targeting both domestic and international audiences. It traces the globalization of Thai art cinema by focusing on three directors – Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Anocha Suwichakornpong – scrutinizing the contexts and discourses that have affected the construction of their cinematic texts and identities on their paths to international renown. Using John T. Caldwell's 'integrated cultural-industrial analyses' approach, my arguments draw out the interactions and contestations between eastern and western modes of address at a moment of geopolitical and transnational convergence between local, regional and international film industries and cultures. The study positions the directors as the centres of interest – in my term the 'director as method' - and investigates how they have encountered and negotiated various filmmaking discourses in their desire to be a global author. Most importantly, I show how their authorship has been interrupted by emergent elements in the discourses.

Focusing on the authorship of these three directors reveals the historical evolution of Thai art cinema in the last two decades. A study of Pen-ek's relationship with his crew helps us see how his collaborative approach to authorship was interrupted by cinematic 'noises' as he became branded as a 'pan-Asian' author with certain recognisable cinematic aesthetics. A pioneer of the independent route that has recently developed in Thai cinema, Apichatpong has long mobilized several financing approaches, combining a 'homemade' filmmaking style, Bourdieu's social capital or expanded 'emotional capital', the 'European variegated film model', distributed financing, and a background in visual arts to construct a 'democratic art' network that allows him to maintain his hybrid cinematic style, mixing contrasting artistic styles, which I define as 'post-interstitial' authorship. Anocha, on the other hand, seems to be more closely identified with 'intertext-based authorship,' which is to say that she depends on the support of such organizations as film festivals, film distributors and, most importantly, connections with other successful auteurs, especially Apichatpong. Like many other directors who have followed Apichatpong's mode of filmmaking by depending on international funds, a 'slow cinema' artistic style and niche audience groups around the world, Anocha and her so-called indie art films might be seen as part of a global generation of authors whose identities and practices depend on global dynamics.

The central conclusion of the thesis is that, despite the fall of the romantic notion of individual creativity, the promotion of single cinematic auteurs is still central to the dialogues of transnational cinema. To reach the top status in world cinema, one must construct and maintain an authorial identity that indicates artistic superiority.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: Anchalee Chaiworaporn

Title of thesis: Border Crossings and the Cinemas of Thai Arthouse Directors

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. 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;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. 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;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Parts of this work have been published as:

'Diversity in Paradox: From Global to Small Cinemas', *Bangkok Art and Culture Centre E-Journal* 2021, Thailand.

'Anocha Suwichakornpong, Film Festivals and the Construction of Art Cinema Auteur', *Inter-Asia*, 2023, Singapore.

'Post-Interstitial Authorship in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Cinema,' in *The Films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul*, edited by Anik Sarkar and Jayjit Sarkar (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2023).

Signature: Anchalee Chaiworaporn

Date: 17 July 2022

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible if the Rockefeller-initiated Asian Cultural Council had not granted me a fellowship to embark upon research under the same title in New York in 2016. I would like to thank the Council and staff members Cecily Cook and Jeremy Gleason for their assistance and for connecting me with several resources and institutes during my research trip. That small research has finally been developed into this thesis.

Special acknowledgement is given to my supervisor, Tim Bergfelder, for his continual support both in academic consultation and encouragement, especially during my difficult times during the pandemic. His extensive knowledge has enriched me with a vibrancy of many new theories that helped sharpen this thesis. Thanks are also given to another supervisor, Ruby Cheung, for advice and suggestions.

This thesis would have never be completed without the University of Southampton's Vice Chancellor's Award. I am also grateful to Robert Williamson for his editing and criticism. No changes of intellectual content were made as a result of this advice. I also would like to thank all of the staff at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities Graduate Office and the Hartley Library, who gave me a lot of help whenever I made a request or sought assistance.

I would also like to thank several Thai directors Somkiat Vituranij and Sakchai Deenan who have shared with me their knowledge and experience on the unofficial culture of the Thai film industry, which have grown from family business before arriving at the professional points in the last two decades.

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, who passed away at the peak of the pandemic. Her strength is always a good model for my life, inspiring me to fight to overcome whatever obstacles come my way. I also thank my sisters and brother, who continue to support me.

Chapter 1 Introduction



Figure 1. 1 *Ong Bak* (left) and *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (right)

Until recently, Thailand was a relatively unknown film culture globally, except for the brief recognition of the first Thai New Wave from the late 1970s to mid-1980s.¹ But in the early 2000s, Thai cinema suddenly became known on the global film circuit, attracting both general filmgoers and film specialists. This unprecedented phenomenon was marked by the simultaneous breakthroughs of Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Prachya Pinkaew² in 2004, when the former won the Cannes Special Jury Prize for his feature *Tropical Malady* (Sud Pralad). The same year Thai martial arts film *Ong Bak*, a collaboration between director Prachya, choreographer Panna Rittikrai and actor Tony Jaa, was an unexpected global hit. One year later, remake rights to a Thai film were acquired by Hollywood for the first time, for the horror film *Shutter*³ (Parkpoom Wongpoom and Banjong Pisanthanakun, 2004), which had been a domestic and regional hit across Asia. This success was consolidated by Apichatpong's 2010 Palme d'Or victory with *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (Lung Boonmee raluek chat). Over a short period, then, Thai cinema became recognized for both its genre cinema and arthouse auteurs.

¹ This group of cinema had exposed only to some Asian-focused film festivals like Hawaii International Film Festival, Nantes-based Festival des 3 Continents, and Fukuoka Asian Film Festival, or some particular events that had connected to British and late Japanese critics Tony Rayns and Tadao Sato.

²To correspond with the Thai social practices, all of the first names of these directors will be used throughout in this dissertation, that is, Pen-ek, Apichatpong, and Anocha, after the first marking of full name.

³ Silvia Wong, 'New Regency set to shutter Thai remake deal', *Screen International*, 12 May 2005 <<https://www.screendaily.com/new-regency-set-to-shutter-thai-remake-deal/4023019.article>> [accessed 26 November 2022] (para.1 of 4)



Figure 1. 2 *Fun Bar Karaoke* in Berlin (left) and *Tears of the Black Tiger* in Cannes (right)

This cinematic diversity was not an overnight phenomenon, and did not only comprise the works of avant-gardist Apichatpong or Prachya's martial arts team. By then, the world cinema market had already been introduced to a first generation of 'New Thai Cinema'⁴ – an elusive term that has been used more by western media than by those in Thailand. Although film culture in the country was evidently changing at that time, there was still no clearcut recognition of a New Thai Cinema movement.⁵ The term was first applied to with both art films and popular movies that were made by a generation of filmmakers with backgrounds in advertising, who started to enter the local film industry in 1997. The pioneers included Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Nonzee Nimibutr, Wisit Sasanatieng and Yongyoot Thongkongthun, as well as theatre director Ekachai Uekrongtham. Pen-ek was the first to receive global recognition when his directorial debut *Fun Bar Karaoke* (1997) premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival, two decades after the last Thai film had appeared there; his second film, *Sixty-nine* (Ruang talok 69), was also selected by Berlin two years later. *Fun Bar Karaoke* depicts the superstitious and crime-prone city of Bangkok through the eyes of two lonely teenagers; *Sixty-nine* follows a young woman who faces being laid off as a result of the 1997 economic downturn that hit Thailand and the surrounding region. Meanwhile Wisit, who had started out in advertising, expanded the Thai global presence with his directorial debut *Tears of the Black Tiger* (Fah Talai Jone, 2000), a postmodern genre pastiche of forbidden love across the class divide, which became the first Thai movie to be selected for

⁴ The term has been less used in the last decade, following the arrival of independent art filmmakers, which are mostly recognized under this new term.

⁵ Anchalee Chaiworaporn and Adam Knee, 'Thailand: Revival in an Age of Globalization', in *Contemporary Asian Cinema*, ed. by Anne Tereska Ciecko (New York: Berg, 2006), pp.58-70 (p.60).

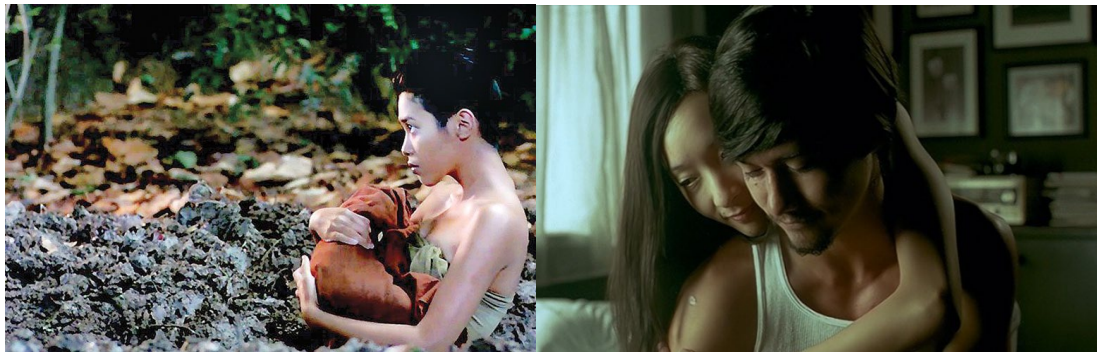


Figure 1. 3 Asian hits *Nang Nak* (left) and global popularity *Shutter*

competition at Cannes. Thereafter, Thai cinema was celebrated everywhere, from Cannes, Venice and Berlin to Toronto and numerous other events around the world.⁶

Parallel to the international film festival circuit,⁷ Thai popular film genres – horror, martial arts and romance – have been successful across Asia, driven by the pan-Asian blockbuster⁸ of the horror film *Nang Nak* (Nonzee Nimibutr, 1999), a film which is based on a shared Asian myth of a pregnant-mother-turned-ghost.⁹ The market for Thai genre films subsequently extended across the globe, with the surprise comedy hit about a transvestite basketball team, *Iron Ladies* (Satee

⁶ The global achievement of New Thai Cinema at that time or since has usually been tallied in terms of international recognition at major film festivals like Cannes, Berlin and Venice. Pen-ek's *Fun Bar Karaoke* and Nonzee's *Daeng Bailey and the Young Gangsters* were officially selected for the competition in Festival des 3 Continents, in which the former won the Special Jury Prize. But this triumph was little known in Thailand itself.

⁷ Julian Stringer, 'Global Cities and the International Film Festival Economy', in *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context*, ed. by Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice (London: Blackwell, 2001), pp.134-144; Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005); Dina Iordanova, 'The Film Festival Circuit', in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*, ed. by Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies and College Gate Press, 2009), pp.23-39.

⁸ Patrick Frater, 'Fortissimo serves up spicy Thai dish', *Screen International*, 22 February 2001 <<https://www.screendaily.com/fortissimo-serves-up-spicy-thai-dish/405093.article>> [accessed 14 Nov.2022] (para.1 of 6)

⁹ The regional achievement of *Nang Nak* was not addressed only by the *Screen* journalist, but also Malaysian film expert Hassan Muthalib who tributes the film as 'started[ing] the horror genre craze in Asia'. After the Asian success of *Nang Nak*, a Japanese professor visited Thailand, researching the connection between Thai and Japanese legend which was also made into the movie called *Ubume*. Malaysian female director Shuhaime Baba made the same story into *Pontinak* from Muslim point of view and was released in 2004. The *Pontinak* ghost is later researched and written by Rosalind Galt as a book entitled *Alluring Monsters: The Pontianak and Cinemas of Decolonization*. This ghost of pregnant mother also exists in other cultures like South Korea, Indonesia and etc, with each of different point of view.



Figure 1. 4 *Iron Ladies* (left) and *Beautiful Boxer* (right)

Lek, Yongyoot Thongkongthun, 2000), grossing \$9 million worldwide.¹⁰ Again, the makers of genre cinema often came from backgrounds in television commercials. Tilman Baumgärtel¹¹ points out that their relevant directing experience gave them ‘an understanding of what the people want to see and have proven that they are able to deliver to the expectations of the mass market.’ Thai studios started to seek them out and offer them opportunities to make their directorial debuts.¹² The achievement of both film worlds – arthouse and genre – quickly drew the regionally based international film agents Fortissimo Film Sales and Golden Network to approach Thailand and put the once-unknown film culture on the global map.

Apichatpong silently and individually came to the filmmaking world through a different route (architecture and art school) and with a completely different style in 2000 with his documentary debut *Mysterious Objects at Noon*. Two years later, his directorial debut *Blissfully Yours* (2002) surprisingly entered to Cannes’ Un Certain Regard after the phenomenon that was made by *Tears of the Black Tiger* a year ago.

This thesis will explore only one aspect of the globalized Thai film – its art cinema, consisting of both the first and second generations of New Thai Cinema directors (those emerging around 1997

¹⁰ Karen Mazurkewich, 'The Movie Man', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 166:3 (23 January 2003), p.53 <<https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/movie-man/docview/208233274/se-2?accountid=13963>> [17 June 2020].

¹¹ Tilman Baumgärtel, *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema: Essays, Documents, Interviews* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p.23 <<https://www-jstor-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt1xwgkr>> [accessed 10 March 2019].

¹² Anchalee Chaiworaporn, *Khwan Samnuekruam Nai Phattanakarn Silpa Lae Karnwijarn Khong Thai 2525-2550: Papphayon* [Common Awareness in the Evolution of Thai Art and Criticism: Significant Milestones 1982-2007: Cinema] (Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund, 2019a), Appendix 2: Nonzee.

and those after 2004) – in order to explore how these filmmakers have achieved their transnational journeys, and to trace how they have been part of what Baumgärtel calls, ‘a fundamental power shift’¹³ involving the developing countries of the world. Unlike the directors associated with popular genres, art cinema directors are usually branded as auteurs, even when they are first-time directors. The objective of my thesis is to disentangle the factors surrounding the global rise of a once-unknown film culture and the effects that have subsequently impinged on authorship of Thai art cinema. To achieve this, three questions are set as guidelines for this research to follow. Firstly, how are these directors situated in the Thai context? Secondly, what are the global factors that have facilitated the rise of these filmmakers? Lastly, how is their authorship affected by those circumstances in creating their movies and sustaining their careers in a transnational cinema network?

My thesis focuses on three transnational directors – Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Anocha Suwichakornpong - from different generations, genders, and modes of global engagement, to construct a more nuanced picture of Thai cinema in the international arena. All three directors received part of their education in the US, which might reflect something about the outlooks of the creators of today’s transnational cinema based on their tripartite cultural experiences (Thai-born, US-educated and enmeshed in a network of mainly European filmmaking resources). The first case study is Pen-ek, the most senior and arguably the original pioneer of New Thai Cinema, who moved to the United States during his high-school days in the 1970s, spending almost a decade there and completing an art history degree at the Pratt Institute in New York. He returned to Bangkok in the late 1980s and acquired his filmmaking skills while working in the advertising industry.¹⁴ When Pen-ek made his directorial debut, he had already gained prominence in Thai and Southeast Asian advertising circles. He approached the oldest film studio in Thailand, Five Star Production, to invest in his cinematic debut and released it domestically. After his two Berlin premieres, Fortissimo Film Sales head Wouter Barendrecht approached him and guided the development of Pen-ek’s transnational career by creating for him a production method based on the Wong Kar-Wai/Christopher Doyle model. This resulted in two pan-Asian co-production features, *Last Life in the Universe* (Ruang Rak Noinid Mahasan, 2003) and *Invisible Waves* (Khamhipaksa Mahasamut, 2005). The new method was an extension of the

¹³ Baumgärtel, p.7.

¹⁴ Advertising was a fruitful and creative business at that time, where most film graduates chose to work, instead of the unprofessional and insecure film industry. Not surprisingly, most of the first generation of New Thai Cinema came from the field.

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existing European co-production model designed to create a pan-Asian niche paradigm. *Last Life in the Universe* tells of the romance between a Japanese man intending to commit suicide and a lonely Thai woman, while *Invisible Waves* portrays the struggle to survive of a Japanese man involved in criminal activity from Hong Kong to Thailand. These two films represent Pen-ek's most critically successful period, but after the sudden deaths of Barendrecht in 2009 and Thai studio head Charoen lamphungporn in 2012, he was forced to go independent.

Apichatpong entered the global map of cinema in a different way, both in terms of his background, his filmmaking and his vision. The son of two physicians, he trained in architecture at Khon Kaen University in the poor north-eastern region of Thailand. He then went to the US for a postgraduate degree at the Art Institute of Chicago.¹⁵ Among the three filmmakers in this thesis, he has been the most celebrated and earned the most diversity of cultural ground - arguably culminating in works that combine both eastern and western values, high and low culture, and urban and rural elements. Apichatpong's transnational connections were first established at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam (IFFR), when he applied to the Hubert Bals Fund¹⁶ for money to complete his directorial debut *Mysterious Object at Noon* (Dokfa Nai Meuman, 2000) – a documentary on Thai lives in four regions of the country. This initial attempt connected him with the festival director Simon Field, his later mentor-cum-producer. Apichatpong's interconnection with the network of major film festivals was solidified when his first feature *Blissfully Yours* (2002) – a day in the life of a Burmese worker and his Thai girlfriend, who try to balance his illegal migration status with their love life, won the Un Certain Regard Mécénat Atladis Prize at Cannes, after which the same festival awarded him the Special Jury Prize for *Tropical Malady* in 2004 and the Palme d'Or in 2010. Initially, Apichatpong collaborated with European companies in all aspects of the filmmaking process, from funding to distribution and exhibition, and was more prominent on the global stage before a short period of domestic releases. After Thailand came under military control in 2014, he decided to stop making films there. He later settled in Chiang Mai, a tourist town in the north of Thailand and a favourite abode for expats. His most recent feature film, *Memoria* (2021), was produced in Colombia.

¹⁵ In the Thai custom, parents send off their children to study abroad after their first degrees. In this way, the children can build up 'a batch network' which will be very useful for them to achieve in their career and future.

¹⁶ The Hubert Bals Fund was founded in 1988 and named after the first director of International Film Festival Rotterdam. It is one of the major financial resources that have been applied by the Thai independent group, following by Busan International Film Festival's Asian Cinema Fund, Paris Project and etc.

Younger female director Anocha has followed Apichatpong's independent route, but in a much more complicated and uneven way. Like Apichatpong, she is not from Bangkok, but grew up in the tourist towns of Cholburi and Phuket provinces. Like Pen-ek, she continued her education in the West from secondary school and universities in England where she received two degrees in jewellery design and cultural studies. Her filmmaking started at Columbia University in the US. As a newcomer following in the footsteps of acclaimed directors, she applied for whatever funds became available to her, from the Thai Ministry of Culture to the IFFR, and occupied shifting roles as director, producer, mentor and grant supporter. Having been born in 1976, the year when Thai students were massacred by the military during a political uprising, Anocha has consciously adopted a strong political perspective in her work. *Mundane History* provides a critique of the patriarchal structures of Thai society through its portrayal of one family, while *By the Time It Gets Dark* tells the story of filmmakers and former students who lived through the events of 1976. She has made two other features. *Krabi, 2562* (2019), which she co-directed with British documentarist Ben Rivers, is about the transformation of the Thai tourist town Krabi. Her most recent film, *Come Here* (2021), details an encounter between a group of friends at a wartime memorial in Kanchanaburi province. As a young and inexperienced director, Anocha immersed herself into a strong interdependence with the transnational networks of film festivals, to an even larger degree than Apichatpong himself. As a female director, Anocha proposes new kind of post-feminist call by raising the questions of absence or lack of female representation. After a decade of institutional support, Anocha has moved into academia and visual arts circles, teaching fulltime at her previous school, Columbia University, since 2022.

My dissertation will explore the interrelation between the global film industry and its influence on the texts made by these directors. In other words, contexts and texts permeate each other – and I include an analysis of paratexts in order to challenge the claims made by post-structuralists who follow Roland Barthes' notion of the death of the author by insisting on the importance of contexts. The 'contextualization' and 'textualization' approaches have been taken by several theorists in the last decades in tackling the changing paradigm of authorship in a new era of 'post-auteurism.'¹⁷ John T. Caldwell, the production studies theorist, also proposes a similar idea by integrating textual analysis within the 'economic, institutional and ethnographic research framework,' with the exploration of cultural and class elements in the production practices of

¹⁷ Pam Cook, 'Authorship and Cinema', in *The Cinema Book*, ed. by Pam Cook (London: British Film Institute, 2007), pp.387-483 (p.479).

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directors.¹⁸ What he means here regarding ‘textual analysis’ does not refer only to the screen text as it is commonly understood, but to all of the ‘cultural practices’ that can be considered as ‘texts’ by themselves, ‘each of which is an ensemble of other texts,’ or texts that refer to other texts – which Caldwell defines as meta texts,¹⁹ since contemporary film studies has moved beyond the false binary of ‘text-as-screen’ and ‘context-as-industry.’²⁰ Jonathan Gray’s paratextual studies²¹ might also be considered as another form of texts that produced before, after or during the process of production of the primary screen text.

Three strategies combine in this framework to maintain these two dialogues of encounter throughout this study. First, the director will be the centre of arguments since their filmmaking journey have moved differently according to each of their local, regional and global contexts, as well as well as their period of integration, which might affect their authorship. In my opinion, post-structural approaches to authorship studies emphasize the institutional dependence of a director – by focusing on one particular context which enclaves the director within that discourse. Apichatpong, for example, would be considered an institutional auteur if this study concentrated on his relation to the Cannes International Film Festival alone. But, by choosing to focus on his funding processes, the result is more dynamic, manifesting his mobilization and particular network. In some cases, like *Anocha*, no changes occur even though the study is framed within different discourses – from film festivals, to home video releases and connection to Apichatpong. It can be argued that this strategy implies a notion of ‘director as method,’ which is distinct from the original concept of authorship – an individual’s creativity. In this study, the ‘director as method’ will also incorporate scrutiny of context and paratext to see how each filmmaker engages with changing contexts surrounding their filmmaking, not only through the textual analysis of their works. At the end, the output will foreground a picture of Thai art cinema in the local, regional and global space.

Secondly, the methods that I use in the study here – the analysis of production, funding, and distribution and exhibition discourses – all are aspects of production studies, which has not been

¹⁸ John T. Caldwell, ‘Screen Studies and Industrial ‘Theorizing’’, *Screen*, 50.1 (2009), 167-179 (pp.170-1) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjn074>> [accessed 25 April 2020].

¹⁹ John T. Caldwell, ‘Para-Industry, Shadow Academy’, *Cultural Studies*, 28.4 (2014), 720-740 (p.721) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2014.888922>> [22 February 2022].

²⁰ Caldwell, *Screen Studies and Industrial Theorizing*, p 171.

²¹ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: NYU Press, 2010), pp.27-29. EBook Central eBook.

applied to much Asian cinema research. This study can be considered an initial attempt to look at local/international encounters using aspects of production studies, which I think will bear more fruit if elaborated through Asian perspectives and discourses.

In this study, I will employ Caldwell's 'screen theorizing' method, which posits 'critical, textualized fieldwork' as an important approach. He criticizes that 'industry artefacts,' 'screen texts,' and documents are the three 'convention-driven' tools and "scripted" acts of industrial-cultural interpretation, which need to be re-examined. He does not offer an exact meaning of 'industry artefacts' but can be read as referring to any kinds of resources produced within the industry. The 'screen theorizing' method is implemented with flexibility by observing 'technologies, trade discourses and work practices,' that produce 'screen phenomena.'²² Caldwell prefers to define the industry as a 'para-industry,'²³ referring to all of the 'industrial, cultural and corporate' contexts and environments, that buffer and complicate any access to traditionally primary objects of research such as messages, texts, forms, institutions and audiences.' In Caldwell's case, he uses his background in film/video production, film studies and television studies, combined with other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, cultural geography and political economy, as the main method of study and calls them together 'integrated cultural-industrial analyses.'²⁴ What is interesting about Caldwell's approach is his intention to integrate local, national, and international perspectives – or what he calls 'microsociological cultural analysis with macrosociological political economic frameworks'²⁵ – in his study. Caldwell's theory is advantageous to my study of the Thai global art cinema, which must be considered a product of national, regional and international discourses. It also speaks of a process that continues to develop twenty-five years after its emergence in 1997 – a period in which many industrial, cultural, and economic changes took place in Thailand, Asia, and the world, in ways that facilitated each director's path into the global film industry. For example, during Anocha's entry into the global arts circle, Thailand's Culture Ministry – after its reformation in 2002²⁶ – started to emphasize cinema in its culture policies. Abroad, a number of new funds were added to both

²² Caldwell, *Screen Studies and Industrial Theorizing*, p.170.

²³ Caldwell, *Para-Industry*, Shadow Academy, p.721.

²⁴ More details John T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008), p.4; John T. Caldwell, 'Para-Industry: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters', *Cinema Journal*, 52.3 (2013), 157-165 (p.163) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2013.0014>> [accessed 11 May 2020].

²⁵ Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity*, p.5.

²⁶ Thailand's Ministry of Culture was first established in 1952 before being closed down six years later.

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Asian and European film festivals, such as the Busan International Film Festival and the Locarno Film Festival. Digital filmmaking was also rapidly taking hold in the Southeast Asian region, helping to cut production costs. It is therefore important to use different critical methods as appropriate to each filmmaker's journey.

Furthermore, some historical approaches will also be useful in this study. As Noel King and Toby Miller put it, there is a need to position auteur criticism in a larger context of film history,²⁷ beyond the social and industrial discourses that overdetermine individual expression. Gianni Rondolino also encourages historical approaches to film analysis that focus on the social and cultural dimensions of film authorship,²⁸ while Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover prefer to look at it in terms of historical and ahistorical impulses.²⁹ According to them, studies of art cinema often appear to render it ahistorical – a timeless field in which the same patterns of 'ever-same fantasy' are repeated, such as the rise of a new national cinema, as we can see the birth of New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s and in the rise of younger Thai independents in the mid-2000s. These two approaches help to identify changes in the Thai film industry, the rise of pan-Asian cinema, and last but not least the emergence of art cinema in Thai culture.

In consequence, this study will bring to the third strategy that the rise of three Thai film directors will be examined not only in their confrontations with national and transnational industries, but also in a comparative framework with regional industries and cultures – as Koichi Iwabuchi puts it, 'media globalisation enhances regionalisation.'³⁰ Despite his focus being on the waves of the inter-Asian pop culture network of production, circulation and consumption – particularly East Asian industries – it is still useful to apply Iwabuchi's approach to see how global art cinema sits socioculturally within nations and regions. Should regionalism be understood as 'an intermediate zone between the deterritorialising impulses of capitalism and the territorial limits of

²⁷ Noel King and Toby Miller, 'Auteurism in the 1990s', in *The Cinema Book* (see above at n.17), pp.474-478.

²⁸ Gianni Rondolino, 'A Film History without Authors?', in *Oltre l' autore I. Fotogenia*, ed. by A. Boschi and G. Manzoli, (1995), p.2, cited in Rosanna Maule, *Beyond Auteurism: New Directions in Authorial Film Practices in France, Italy and Spain Since the 1980s* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), p.21. Ebook Central ebook.

²⁹ Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, 'Introduction: The Impurity of Art Cinema', in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories*, ed. by Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (New York: Oxford University Press, p.2010), pp.3-27 (pp.12-15).

³⁰ Koichi Iwabuchi, 'De-westernisation, Inter-Asian Referencing and Beyond', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 17.1 (2014), 44-57 (p.48) <DOI: 10.1177/1367549413501483> [accessed 18 May 2022].

nationalism,³¹ to which end Olivia Khoo borrows from Prasenjit Duara's³² notion of globalization and Asian region? In integrating Thai global art cinema into conceptions of Asian cinema, I will elaborate Iwabuchi's notion of 'inter-Asian referencing' as one of the approaches to see how Thai global art cinema has operated on both the region and the world stages. In defining the term 'inter-Asian referencing,' Iwabuchi suggests to see – both at the academic level and in everyday practice – how each country confronts and relates to each other in the dialogues of Asian cinema.³³ This approach will be useful, especially in the analysis of interrelation between Pen-ek's authorship and pan-Asian cinema, as well as Anocha and her preference for middle-ground film festivals in Europe, rather than Asian ones.

While most of the research on border-crossing cinema is focused within the thematic bounds of migration, diaspora, borders and interstices, to name a few, my thesis prefers to look at the mobility of the directors through their educational backgrounds and their dependence on production, distribution and exhibition networks, so that we can understand the trajectory of global art cinema today. Ran Ma's study on independent border-crossing cinema in Southeast Asia and East Asia is rich here, although I might not agree with everything she says. What I find useful here is her framework for rethinking the relation between 'cinematic transnationalism'³⁴ and the changing paradigm of migration arising from globalization. To her, globalization has both brought and sent many back home and abroad, creating different 'circuits of transnationality.' In her case, it is the 'rhizomatic connections' between independent filmmakers across the East Asian and Southeast Asian regions, leading to a 'specific breed of border-crossing films', that have 'registered, embodied, and intersected' at the level of both discourse and practice. Using her work as a backdrop to a comparative study can demonstrate the sharedness and differences that Thai transnational directors have (or do not have) with their Asian contemporaries.

Within this framework in which the three strategies are incorporated, multi-modal approaches are used for the analysis of production discourses and their texts in order to see an overall picture of global arts authorship in relation to production studies. This 'polycentric approach' has long

³¹ Olivia Khoo, *Asian Cinema: A Regional View* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021), p.9 <DOI: 10.3366/edinburgh/9781474461764.001.0001> [accessed 17 May 2022].

³² Prasenjit Duara, 'Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 69.4 (November 2010), 963-983 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40929275>> [accessed 30 March 2565].

³³ Iwabuchi, *De-westernisation*, p.48.

³⁴ Ran Ma, *Independent Filmmaking across Borders in Contemporary Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), p.29 <<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789462986640>> [accessed 21 April 2022].

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been acknowledged by several theorists studying ‘world cinema.’ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam can be considered as among the pioneers in proposing the concept of “polycentric multiculturalism’ as an alternative to liberal pluralism in scrutinizing cultural works, rather than polarizing the difference through such notions as ‘Eurocentrism,’ ‘racism,’ the ‘Third World’, and ‘postcoloniality.’³⁵ Lúcia Nagib also adopts ‘a positive, democratic and inclusive approach’ to film studies, whereas ‘world cinema’ is defined as a ‘polycentric phenomenon’ alternating in different places and periods of creation.³⁶ Patricia White also uses a ‘polycentric approach’, which is considered ‘relational’ in applying feminist theory to the analysis of women’s works by using ‘authorial, industrial, textual, and comparative dimensions.’³⁷ This ‘polycentric approach’ not only helps me find perspectives that serve the changing characteristics of global arts cinema over the last twenty-five years, but also engages with the current political debates on the distinction of global north and south. While the concepts of de-westernization and de-historicization have been used as entry points by several scholars to register their names in the academic world, my analysis will be based on the in-betweenness shared by both western and eastern wells of thoughts. In the same way as arts, both approaches dialectically ‘illuminate paths to each other,’ rather than against each other.

In choosing the best methods to explore the processes and signatures of authorship of each director, I start with an overview of the general characteristics of the local, Asian and global film industries surrounding each director’s filmmaking trajectory, before moving to look at the craftsmanship of each. After that, I choose the most notable aspects of their practice as the focus of research. In the case of the New Thai Cinema pioneer Pen-ek Ratanaruang, his cinematic output lacks consistency due to his lack of formal filmmaking education and changing film policies in each period of his career. In short, his authorship has always been a process of negotiation. Nevertheless, he and his crew are the most experienced creatives in this study – Apichatpong and Anocha mostly use crewmembers who graduated at the same time as they did. As a result, the collaborations between Pen-ek and his crew are critical here, not only in terms of teamwork but

³⁵ Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, 2nd edn. (Routledge, 2014), pp.46-49 <<https://doi-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/10.4324/9781315771441>> (accessed 24 January 2023).

³⁶ Lúcia Nagib, *World Cinema and The Ethics of Realism* (New York: Continuum, 2011), p.1 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781628929188.0006>> (accessed 24 Jan. 2023)

³⁷ Patricia White, *Women’s Cinema, World Cinema: Projecting Contemporary Feminisms* (Duke University Press, 2015), p.16. Ebook Central Proquest.

also in the way they adapt to encounters with different kinds of film policies. Therefore, I have chosen to study their collaborative authorship, since its theoretical emergence in 1985.³⁸

When it comes to Apichatpong, his trajectory has moved into the opposite direction. Starting a few years after Pen-ek, he shared the same limited access to financial resources – even more so given his independent approach. Although some independently minded filmmakers already existed around the Thai film industry, most of them ended up making popular works for the commercial studios. Local and international funding was scarce. Only the International Film Festival of Rotterdam was a viable source of funds at that time. His works continue to be considered among the most original and authentic by world film critics and academics. To understand his process of filmmaking, I will scrutinize his mode of financing and producing – in which he is also a part of the work.

The endeavours of Pen-ek's international collaborations and Apichatpong's independent route had reaped rewards for the following generation of Thai filmmakers by the time Anocha started out in the late 2000s, as Thai cinema (both arthouse and commercial) had been recognized worldwide and numerous opportunities were by then on offer to independent filmmakers – training, funding, exhibition and even distribution – on local, regional and global stages. At the global level, Europe was now an active contributor with all kinds of support for independent art cinema. Compared to Pen-ek and Apichatpong, Anocha was able to recognise routes toward global arts cinema production right away, and could access financial resources faster than they had. Such global institutional support allowed her to be more engaged with – albeit arguably more dependent on – the global art cinema community, which is the focus of my analysis of her career. Through the mentioned notion of 'director as method', I posit three types of global authorship – Pen-ek and his negotiation of authorship, Apichatpong's post-interstitial authorship, and Anocha's construction of intertext-based authorship.

My study will then depend on document resources, but offers new ways of understanding them. A wide range of resources will be taken, varying from journalistic and critical writings, academic and research papers, and industrial resources ranging from press materials and websites. Some of these resources have been accumulated during my own experience as a journalist, critic, festival consultant, and researcher in the Thai and Asian film industries since 1994. The topics of

³⁸ More details in Chapter 2.

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study vary from changing characteristics of niche cinema industries and transnational networks in the modes of production, circulation and exhibition. From the diversity of these perspectives, I will further explore how the authorship of these directors is affected by changing paradigms in the arthouse sector of the global film business. All of this process is kept along the three research questions – the places of directors in the Thai film industry, the local and global supports to facilitate arts cinema, and the characteristics of their works.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit several groups of benefactors – both policymakers and film academics, both in Asia and across the world, studying film policies and authorship. In terms of policy-making, the study will be of use to any government, especially those in Southeast Asia, seeking to learn how to develop a role and identity for their nation in the realm of global cinema. This is important as Southeast Asian governments increasingly attempt to project soft power by constructing new cultural strategies that can enhance their nations' economic and political power in the same way that East Asian states have done. As yet, these objectives have not been accomplished, perhaps because many such policies have lacked direction or concrete plans for further development. For example, under the administration of the Culture Ministry of Thailand, national film policies have merely followed the models used by film festivals, some of which do not fit well in the Asian context. The co-production training and opportunities organized by the Thai government during the Cannes International Film Festival are examples of such failed projects, in this case because the way participants were selected was confused, with genre film projects included in activities supposedly emphasizing global art cinema. As a result, most independent filmmakers continue to look to the west for support and resources. By engaging in this study with Thai and Asian perspectives, I aim to present findings that will be more pragmatic and can be justified in Southeast Asian contexts. At the same time, the study will also be useful for global funders as it assesses their film policies and points the way toward best practices that can be incorporated into future development. Also, by engaging with two streams of dialectical pairings – that is, theoretical and practical modes of address, as well as western and eastern concepts of thought – this research offers some new approaches to applying the discussed film theories to Southeast Asian cinema. The findings will enrich the theoretical development of authorship studies, especially through my strategy of 'director as method', my analysis of the process of 'producing global arts cinema,' and my survey of Asian and the global film policies. Some new grounds are suggested to Asian film scholars in the study of production culture and the relationship between class and authorship.

1.1 Debating authorship in a contemporary context

Theories of authorship have undergone considerable changes since the Cahiers du *Cinéma* inception of the *politique des auteurs* in the 1950s. Subsequently, the concept was adopted by American critic Andrew Sarris to categorize Hollywood commodity products into a hierarchy of directorial supremacy – from the workmanlike and genre-oriented to the pantheon of cinematic artistry. Over the past decades, the notion of individual creativity has been modified and transformed into a pool of theoretical contestations, in which even some minor genre films otherwise treated as cult or trash cinema have been endowed with individual signatures. In academia, the notion of individual craftsmanship was first developed beyond its French origins in the 1960s, particularly in publications in England and the US. By the 1970s, this valorisation of intentional creativity was being challenged and interrogated by scholars using a variety of approaches, from ‘anthropological structuralism’³⁹ to Marxist semiotics, or what James Naremore clarifies as a conjuncture of ‘Saussurian linguistics, Althusserian Marxism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis.’⁴⁰ When the notion of radical politics emerged from the 1968 movement, authorship approaches were attacked by those who prioritised the socio-political dimensions of film and the development of counter-cinema.⁴¹ Stephen Crofts elucidates the role of the author here as an ‘instance of politics, and/or pleasure,’⁴² where he is considered as a subject in competition with ‘textual productivity.’ In other words, cinematic meaning is not directly constructed by the director himself but operates through the process of production. Also denying the notion of single genius, John Caughie developed the theory by advocating authors as ‘social, sexual, political subjects,’⁴³ built up by the reader through ‘often contradictory discourses.’ Such theorizing was still predominantly a matter of textual analysis, until the advent of post-structuralism in the 1970s, where other sources of materials such as interviews or press kits came to be used. The author was deconstructed into ‘an effect of the text,’⁴⁴ in which all

³⁹ Rosanna Maule, *Beyond Auteurism: New Directions in Authorial Film Practices in France, Italy and Spain Since the 1980s* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2008), p.21. EBook Central eBook.

⁴⁰ James Naremore, ‘Authorship and the Cultural Politics of Film Criticism’, *Film Quarterly (Archive)*, 44.1 (Fall 1990), 14-22 (p.14). ProQuest.

⁴¹ Maule, pp.21-22.

⁴² Stephen Crofts, ‘Authorship and Hollywood’, in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.310-326 (pp.316-8).

⁴³ John Caughie, ‘Fiction of the Author / Author of the Fiction: Introduction’, in *Theories of Authorship*, ed. by John Caughie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp.199-207 (p.201).

⁴⁴ Croft, Authorship and Hollywood, p.318.

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cinematic meanings are interpreted by the audience, and the role of the director is superseded by the 'author-function' of discourse.⁴⁵ Cultural studies also embraced the theory in tandem with class, gender, race, other arts, and national cinemas. With the arrival of an intensified form of globalization and the digital revolution, the study of the auteur has reached its peak with the notion of the 'global author'⁴⁶ in which both textual and post-structural approaches have been employed into the redefining of the term. Since the 1990s, the auteur has been reconceptualized with many categories and approaches. In general, contemporary authorial debates at the global level can be streamlined into two directions. On the one hand, self-expressive dependence is totally rejected as a significant element in the present construction of cinema, especially in relation to global film industry, but pertaining to external elements like discourses, industry, sociology, and the reception processes of cinephilia. On the other hand, singular creativity still exists but needs to be redefined and integrated with those external factors.

I start with the first approach, where the notion of intentionality is deconstructed and the cinematic meaning is shaped by external factors. This method usually starts with Roland Barthes' notion of the 'death of author,' which leads to arguments about 'the author as effect of the text,'⁴⁷ or 'authorship as reading strategy',⁴⁸ (emphasis original). Michael Foucault's synthesis of the 'author-function' is also brought into the debates, culminating into the conceptualization of 'authorship as *site of discourses*'⁴⁹ or 'author as author-name.'⁵⁰ In both accounts, the author has no creative role as suggested by the *politique des auteur*, but has to be analysed 'as a function of discourse.'⁵¹ Relating to the context of cinema, these discourses include changing characteristics of production, distribution, and exhibition, about which the academic debates have mushroomed since the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the earliest post-structural accounts were two seminal essays on the Hollywood film industry, by Timothy Corrigan in 1991 and Justin Wyatt in 1996. Corrigan

⁴⁵ Michael Foucault, 'What is an author?', in *Theories of Authorship: A Reader* (see above at n.43), pp.282-291.

⁴⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Global Author: Control, Creative Constraints, and Performative Self-contradiction', in *The Global Auteur: the Politics of Authorship in 21st Century Cinema*, ed. by Seung-hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski (New York: Bloomsbury Academic), pp.21-41 (p.21) <DOI: 10.5040/9781501312663> [accessed 4 August 2020].

⁴⁷ Croft, *Authorship and Hollywood*, p.318.

⁴⁸ Janet Staiger, 'Authorship Approaches', in *Authorship and Film*, ed. by David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2002), pp.27-57 (p.45) EBook Central eBook.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.46.

⁵⁰ Crofts, *Authorship and Hollywood*, p.319.

⁵¹ Foucault, p.290.

shifts the debate from the old paradigm of expressive genius to a mode that mixes text and reception by using interviews – a ‘semi-textual’ strategy⁵² that connects a filmmaker, his films and an audience – in examining the authorship of Francis Ford Coppola, Alexander Kluge, and Raoul Ruiz.

Coppola is considered a self-destructive auteur who creates identification with his audience through his ‘sympathetic performances.’⁵³ Kluge has multiple identities (as a professor, novelist, filmmaker) and offers work in different media (novels, cinema, television programs), presenting multi-subjectivities to his audience as a process of identification that can reflect itself as an agency for critical ‘self-interpretation and self-critique.’⁵⁴ Ruiz is ‘the auteur as tourist’⁵⁵ creating uncertainty in the audience. Here, a cultural and commercial *intersubjectivity* is the main factor in defining the auteur. In fact, it is constructed by social interaction, not by individual intention or textual development.

Justin Wyatt also echoes Corrigan in asserting the economic factors that have influenced the construction of ‘auteurism’ and the ‘author-name’ in the filmmaking trajectory of Robert Altman, who engaged in different levels of industrial collaborations – first with the studios and later with the major independents. Wyatt points out that such a process had already been proposed by Pauline Kerr in her investigation of Joseph H. Lewis’s works. According to Kerr, the model of ‘attempted authorizations’⁵⁶ had already been evident in the construction of Lewis as an auteur through film festivals programming and journalistic writing – although these efforts ultimately failed to produce a stable reading of Lewis’ work. Through his exploration of Altman’s two decades of filmmaking, Wyatt finds the complexity of the “author-name’ as a means of accounting for the economic aspects of authorship – firstly, the construction of talent in the mainstream world, and later the pioneering of the American arthouse film circle.⁵⁷

⁵² Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.107.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp.108-115.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.118.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.124.

⁵⁶ Pauline Kerr, ‘My Name Is Joseph H. Lewis’, *Screen*, 24.5-6 (1983), 48-66 (p.62).

⁵⁷ Justin Wyatt, ‘Economic Constraints / Economic Opportunities: Robert Altman as Auteur’, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 38 (Fall 1996), 51-67 (pp.66-7). ProQuest.

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Moving away from the Hollywood film industry to European and Japanese contexts, Dudley Andrew insists the role of the auteur in corporate art forms has been minimized only to 'a sign,' or 'a signature.'⁵⁸ Normally, when a project begins, it does not mean 'to originate a work,' but rather 'to deflect a flow to branch off in a direction.' Any makers of difference in the power of the social system are the ones that begin, rather than the power of individual effort and critique which is maintained by that limited sense of novelty. The auteur only marks the 'presence of temporality and creativity' in the text, then disappears and leaves only the 'material body of the text,'⁵⁹ to be read and interpreted by the spectator.

These three influential arguments on the deconstruction of intentional authorship have been supported and challenged by many other theorists over the past three decades, especially after the convergence of globalization, digitalization, and the global expansion of art cinema-making to non-traditional regions. While a number of researches have focused on the American film industry, some attempts have also been made to examine European contexts, where the notion of author cinema originated. Thomas Elsaesser, one theorist of the changing notion of authorship, has developed the issue since the release of his *New German Cinema* book in 1989. In the German film context of the mid-1970s, the author had to be redefined between being an artist and an entrepreneur, usually under the label of 'author-producer.'⁶⁰ In the international film industry, several author-producers like Spielberg, Lucas, Coppola and de Palma also emerged transitionally. As a result, the original concept of self-expression became examined as 'self-image,' where a name is used for marketing purposes through the legitimization of 'seal of quality and a brandname.' Several years later, Elsaesser nevertheless insisted that 'the *auteur* may not be dead,'⁶¹ though now directors are 'staging authorship' by promoting their works at film festivals, or turning themselves into 'pop star role models and idols' for their fans. By 2016, this transformation had expanded around the globe, leading Elsaesser to critically deride notions of global authorship:

The moves by filmmakers in the face of the pressures of globalized authorship, which I identified above as auto-exoticism, becoming a festival talent for hire, or outsourcing oneself to Hollywood, are by and large "adaptive strategies." They

⁵⁸ Dudley Andrew, 'The Unauthorized Auteur Today', in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies: Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Film*, ed. by Jim Collins, Ava Preacher Collins, and Hilary Radner (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 1992), 77-85 (pp.82-3). ProQuest EBook Central.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁶⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p.116.

⁶¹ Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, p.51.

implicitly accept the conditions of the market in cultural capital, reputation, and recognition, and acknowledge the asymmetrical power relations that auteurs find themselves in vis-à-vis the global film business, film festivals, their international audiences, and national governments or funding bodies. Yet there may also be other ways of confronting the “antagonistic mutualities” which keep the system going, i.e. arrangements that on the surface are antagonistic, but hide mutual benefits, or conversely, situations that appear mutually beneficial but hide hidden conflicts), and not necessarily by the kind of outright challenge, sabotage, or refusal.⁶²

According to Elsaesser, mutual benefits are not offered as a one-way site of flows, given by a festival and taken by the global author. Instead, they exchange between and depend on each other. For example, a film made by a global author might prefer to address a ‘self-exoticizing’ theme if there is a feeling that the festival expects this. This kind of mutual benefit is called ‘double occupancy’, and can be manifested in many ways. First is the author’s choices in ‘*servicing at least two masters*’, such as a government and the international film festival (like a festival’s selection of a banned film); a European producer-cum-distributor and a certification of the director as auteur (for the purpose of promotion); or domestic and international audiences (through exhibition and reception). Almost in the same practice, he also represents himself as the servant of two masters by invoking national stereotypes for an international film project. Third is the double identities of filmmakers who are also visual artists, as seen in the case of Apichatpong, which Elsaesser defines as ‘multi-servicing’.⁶³ In order to adapt himself in these multiple roles, the global author accepts many levels of controls – what Elsaesser calls ‘creative constraints’⁶⁴ – or engages in a kind of ‘performative self-contradiction’, behaving in ways opposite to what might be expected.

Even within national contexts, the film author cannot avoid encounters with many different groups of cinematic players in the contemporary audio-visual culture. Applying Janet Staiger’s concept of ‘authorship as a *sociology of production*’⁶⁵ (emphasis in original), Rosanna Maule investigates the authorial discourses around directors in France, Italy and Spain during the 1980s. The ‘figure of the film author’⁶⁶ was found to be affected by the convergence between cultural politics and economic structures that were constructed by national film systems – such as funding

⁶² Elsaesser, *The Global Author*, p.29.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.26-7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.34-6.

⁶⁵ Staiger, p.40.

⁶⁶ Maule, p.32.

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policies, educational and cultural institutions, as well as film *criticism*. Nevertheless, the emerging film author still participated in a transnational film culture derived from the convergence of local and global circuits of distribution. As a result, the borderlines between several characteristics of author cinema were blurred, whether it be between art house and mainstream, national and international film production and the reception. Maule does not totally reject the original notion of individual intention, but elucidates it as ‘reflexive tactics of re-appropriation and re-inscription of cinema’s formulaic and commercial characteristics.’⁶⁷

Australian theorist Barrett Hodsdon also agrees with Elsaesser about the industrial exploitation of authorship – normally evoked in such terms as *auteur branding*, *auteur celebrity*, or *auteur entrepreneurs*. To him, surrounding institutions like film festivals, journalism and film academia should also be part of the analysis of authorial transformation. Such traits, to Hodsdon, can register a director only as ‘implied author’,⁶⁸ equivalent to pseudo-authorship or artificial authorship. Nevertheless, the old notion of authorship, which he identifies as ‘*auteur inscription* or *markership*,’ still exists, but in partiality. Hodsdon sees the elusiveness of the *mise-en-scène* film analysis on which most of the old concept of authorship relies, as well as the formal strategies that entail the ‘*authorial vantage point*.’⁶⁹ This refers to ‘a formal way of looking at, bracketing, and marking the depiction of a fictive world to arrive at a quasi-aesthetic– philosophical regard on the passage of life’. A unity and coherence of theme and style, as a notion of authorial vision, is apparently characterized as an individual expression in this inscription process, corresponding to David Bordwell’s suggestion on the ‘*functions of style and theme*’⁷⁰ as the collective characteristics of art cinema. But today, when traditional *mise-en-scène* analysis is often omitted in the analysis of authorship, especially in studies of Hollywood works, due to the arrival of digital and special effects in which technical staff plays almost the same role of importance as directors, authorial vantage points are still considered important in this association of interrelation. Hodsdon still has a belief in the existence of personal styles but thinks these are reflected through repetitive allegory in an aesthetic structure in the set of narrative. Individual expression will be

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.100.

⁶⁸ Barrett Hodsdon, *The Elusive Auteur: The Question of Film Authorship throughout the Age of Cinema* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2017), p.9. Ebook Central ebook.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ David Bordwell, ‘The Art Cinema as a Mode of Film Practice’, in *Film Theory and Criticism Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.774-782 (p.775).

reflected in a partial ‘inflective agency,’⁷¹ from the territory of aesthetic and narrative elements a director uses to demonstrate his fictive sensibility. Hodsdon believes that individual genius is more apparent in art cinema, especially in connection with world cinema, but under certain structures of institutional interdependence, as he puts it:

.....uncompromising auteur expression and innovation in the traditional sense of the terms, are now contained and protected in the art cinema bubble through the residue of art-houses, specialist film festivals, elite journals, academe and now film collectors’ own private digital worlds.⁷²

It is here that I would like to use Hodsdon’s conception as a starting point for the second direction of authorial criticism in this thesis. Unlike Corrigan and Elsaesser, Hodsdon views the notion of the auteur with a sense of fluidity. He accepts the contemporary transformation towards authorial entrepreneurship, and the decline of *mise-en-scene* analysis, but still invokes it with a possibility of ‘partiality’ – referring to some parts of the expression signifying authorial intention. Although Hodsdon originally applies his argument to Hollywood films, it can incorporate, I argue, arthouse authors, and therefore a similar approach can be applied to the study of Thai art cinema.

Several scholars also join Hodsdon’s argument on the position of subjects in contemporary authorship criticism. In categorizing general approaches to authorship, Janet Staiger concludes that they have developed broadly into two types – the author as subject, and the author as agent.⁷³ In the first, authorial intention is still prioritized in announcing an author as ‘the subject,’ by varying degrees of expression and contextual interrelation. ‘Authorship as *origin*’ is distinguished from ‘authorship as *personality*,’⁷⁴ (emphasis original) by looking at the ‘total awareness and free agency’ that is conceived during the filmmaking process. The author’s level of control over a film production varies, culminating in ‘authorship-within-a-sociology-of-production.’⁷⁵ Intention is less manifest in the second type of approach, and individual creations are influenced by various external determinants such as structured discourses, audiences and the ‘insistent unconscious writing by material discourses’, resulting in ‘authorship as *signature*’, ‘authorship as *reading strategy*’, and ‘authorship as *site of discourses*.’⁷⁶ Staiger herself proposes

⁷¹ Hodsdon, p.280.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.265.

⁷³ Staiger, p.29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.33.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.41-3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.43-6.

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the idea of '*authorship as technique of the self*',⁷⁷ in which an individual is constructed and reconstructed as 'an acting subject' by his own conception of 'a self', exposed from his own internally rebellious or resistant authority. The author is produced from 'a repetitive citation of a performative statement – which is asserted as an agency against the normative - of 'authoring choice'.' Staiger associates this kind of author with marginal groups.

David Bordwell also develops the notion of authorial craftsmanship, but in tandem with what he calls 'the material engagement with filmic form on the part of the director'⁷⁸ – that is, his 'problem-solving' strategies,' rather than the matter of his artistic vision. Dana Polan suggests 'auteur desire'⁷⁹ as a new approach with which to theorize the changing roles of contemporary auteurism. Desires, emotions and bodily sensations, according to him, are important elements of today's cultural studies, in which 'social subjects' are scrutinized – either through the methods of psychoanalysis or socio-analysis – and we see how they react towards the practices surrounding them. Polan cites Susan Hayward's auteur study of Luc Besson as an example. Besson's authorship is not examined in term of artistic supremacy, but on the complex process of his films' production, distribution and reception, involving socioeconomic and political determinants, and on his collaboration with his team.⁸⁰ Contemporary authorship is related to many kinds of environments and contexts - its 'process of isolation and of valorisation,' as well as meaning-making.⁸¹

'The auteur never dies.'⁸² But it has been redefined and expanded to incorporate the works of directors in the other parts of the world, not only the European and American auteurs as in the previous development, due to the changing global film industry. In general, it can be argued that in the academic paradigm of Asian cinema studies, it first started from themes of national cinema and authorship. During the 1950s and 1960s, festivals prioritized their film selections by using the criteria of film nationality. They are now represented by auteurs, rather than by official selections from the national output, and usually this shift occurs through the declaration of a new wave.⁸³

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.49-51.

⁷⁸ David Bordwell, cited in Dana Polan, 'Auteur Desire', *Screening the Past*, 1 March 2001 <<http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-12-first-release/auteur-desire/>> [accessed 21 June 2022] (para.15 of 36).

⁷⁹ Dana Polan, 'Auteur Desire', para.35- 6 of 36.

⁸⁰ Susan Hayward, *Luc Besson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), cited in Dana Polan, para.24-27 of 36.

⁸¹ Polan, para.35-36.

⁸² Cook, p.467.

⁸³ Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, pp.90-91.

But in the contemporary infrastructure of art cinema has seen the focus shift to author films from particular countries – China, Taiwan, Korea, India, Iran, to name a few.⁸⁴ As a result, the ‘return of authorship’ in film academia has unnecessarily been driven by – as Wikanda Promkhunthong puts it - the emergence of East Asian movies that were discussed in prominent media channels in the US and the UK during the early 2000s.⁸⁵ In fact, the return to authorial concerns was already in place since the mid-1990s both in Hollywood and European contexts, according to Dudley Andrew and Rosanna Maule.⁸⁶ In terms of Asian cinema auteurs, they started to be recognized in the west in two streams of exchanges – film festival circuits and the Asian migrants to the Hollywood, which included directors like John Woo and Tsui Hark, as well as stars like Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Michelle Yeoh. In 1995 and 1996, *Time Magazine*’s Richard Corliss published two articles – ‘Asian Invasion’⁸⁷ and ‘Go West, Hong Kong’⁸⁸ – that made manifest this formative wave of Asian filmmakers into the world.

In the paradigm of film festival networks, two small events had long played a significant role to shape Asian cinema spaces in the West – the Nantes-based Festival des 3 Continents, first held in 1979,⁸⁹ and the Hawaii International Film Festival, from 1981.⁹⁰ Furthermore, Ulrich Gregor – the head of the Berlin International Film Festival’s International Forum of Young Cinema can be considered one of the early mediators to bring Asian cinema to the West since the middle of the 1980s.⁹¹ Gregor’s consistent devotion to the cinema of the Third World expressed itself in the Forum policy of presenting one emerging national cinema almost every year – a practice that saw

⁸⁴ Seung-hoon Jeong and Jeremi Szaniawski, ‘Introduction’, in *The Global Auteur: the Politics of Authorship in 21st Century Cinema* (See above at n.46), p.13.

⁸⁵ Wikanda Phromkhunthong, ‘The East Asian Auteur Phenomenon: Context, Discourse and Agency Surrounding the Transnational Reputations of Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Kim Ki-duk and Wong Kar-wai’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Aberystwyth University, 2017), p.1.

⁸⁶ Andrew, *The Unauthorized Auteur*, p.77; Maule, p.23.

⁸⁷ Richard Corliss, ‘Asian Invasion,’ *Time Magazine* 14 August 1995
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,983301-1,00.html>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

⁸⁸ Richard Corliss, ‘Go West, Hong Kong,’ *Time Magazine*, 26 February 1996
<<https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,984183,00.html>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

⁸⁹ Festival des 3 Continents, ‘About Us’, *Festival des 3 Continents*, [n.d.]
<<https://www.3continents.com/en/les-3-continents/decouvrir/>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

⁹⁰ Hawaii International Film Festival, ‘About HIFF’, *Hawaii International Film Festival*, [n.d.]
<<https://hiff.org/home/about-hiff/>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

⁹¹ Ulrich Gregor, ‘History of the International Forum of New Cinema’, *27 Internationales Forum des Jungen Films*, [n.d.] <<https://www.arsenal-berlin.de/forumarchiv/forum97/forges-e.html>> [accessed 15 February 2022]

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'new art cinema objects enter into the field,'⁹² even if only a few films would be screened on the international festival circuit. Starting with a selection of films from 'the first wave of New Taiwanese Cinema'⁹³ in 1986, the Forum continued this tradition with focuses on the Hong Kong New Wave in 1987 (8 films), China's Fifth Generation and Indian cinema (12 films) in 1988, New Korean Cinema in 1998 (13 films), New Thai Cinema in 2004 (4 films), and Philippine cinema (5 films) in 2008 – to name a few.⁹⁴ By the end of 1990s, New Iranian Cinema was also on the global map thanks to 'films for festivals' or 'festival filmmakers.'⁹⁵ In 1999 alone, retrospectives of Iranian Cinema were exhibited in Europe: one at the Paris-based Cinema Du Reel,⁹⁶ the other the British Film Institute's 'Life and Art – The New Iranian Cinema' season. Other national 'new waves' – China's Sixth Generation,⁹⁷ a 'new Romanian realism,'⁹⁸ New Argentine Cinema, to name a few – also emerged around this time, and their associated directors have since gone on to premiere their works at Cannes and Venice. Arguably, film authorship is more identified with art cinema, auteurism and film festivals, especially in the contexts of major western events like the international film festivals of Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Rotterdam. Marijke de Valck also shares the same opinion about the interrelation between the avant-garde tradition, autonomy and creative freedom in the context of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam.⁹⁹ Only a few genre-oriented festivals like Italy's Far East Film Festival still base their selections on genre categories, in which however the names of directors are also sometimes taken into consideration.¹⁰⁰ To some extent, Western academia is also affected by this movement, engendering a wide list of publications in the works of Wong Kar-wai, Zhang Yi-mou, Abbas Kiarostami, Kim Ki-duk, Tsai Ming-liang and then Apichatpong since the mid-1995.

⁹² Galt and Schoonover, p.13.

⁹³ Swapnil Dhruv Bose, '10 Best Films of the Taiwanese New Wave', *Far Out*, 20 November 2020 <<https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/taiwanese-new-wave-10-best-films/>> [accessed 15 February 2022] (para.2 of 31)

⁹⁴ Berlin International Film Festival, 'Archive', in *Berlin International Film Festival* <<https://www.berlinale.de/en/archive-selection/archive.html>> [accessed 15 February 2022].

⁹⁵ Hamid Reza-Sadr, 'Contemporary Iranian Cinema and Its Major Themes', *Life and Art the New Iranian Cinema*, ed. by Rose Issa and Sheila Whitaker (London: British Film Institute, 1999), p.42.

⁹⁶ 'Bio/filmographies', *Life and Art the New Iranian Cinema* (see above at n.95), p.147

⁹⁷ Galt and Schoonover, p.13

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Marijke de Valck, 'Supporting Art Cinema at a Time of Commercialization: Principles and Practices, the Case of the International Film Festival Rotterdam', *Poetics*, 42 (2014) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.11.004>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

¹⁰⁰ Personal experience. The writer has worked as a festival consultant since 2002.

Early academic study of Asian auteurs dates back as far as the 1970s, when several Japanese directors and their works were scrutinized in the West, normally in terms of the construction of a non-Hollywood canon.¹⁰¹ By the late 1980s, due to the rise of cultural studies, Asian cinema started to be examined as ‘a category of film studies’ by itself, not only as work on the periphery of other cinematic centres. As early as the mid-1990s, the works of Chinese-speaking auteurs had already been explored by both western and Asian scholars. One of the pioneering peer-reviewed academic publications, *Asian Cinema Journal*, was launched in 1995¹⁰² by the Asian Cinema Studies Society, and has remained a site for Asian cinema specialists to contribute and learn more from others. In this first wave of Asian cinema scholarship, the concepts of nationhood, transnationalism, gender and authorship were scrutinized in the works of Chinese-speaking authors such as John Woo, Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Ang Lee, and then in the cinemas of Hong Kong’s Second Wave filmmakers like Wong Kar-Wai.¹⁰³ Wong’s authorship was also interrogated by Ackbar Abbas, who positioned him as one of the most political directors in 1990s Hong Kong cinema in presenting the ‘mutations of space and affectivity’¹⁰⁴ by using ‘systematic irresolutions’ through the mediation of genre and fantasy. His works stand on the interim between two realms – between Hong Kong and the rest of the world. The characters

¹⁰¹ Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, ‘National/international/transnational: the Concept of Trans-Asian Cinema and the Cultural Politics of Film Criticism’, in *Theorising National Cinema*, ed. by Paul Willemsen and Valentina Vitali (London: British Film Institute, 2006), pp.254–61 (pp.256-7).

¹⁰² Intellect, ‘Asian Cinema Journal’, *Intellect*, [n.d.] <<https://www.intellectbooks.com/asian-cinema>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

¹⁰³ Some of the early contributors that were available at that time should be mentioned here for further study. Wimal Dissanayake, *Melodrama and Asian Cinema* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993); Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong Action Cinema* (London: Titan Books, 1995); Rey Chow, *Primitive Passions: Visuality, Sexuality, Ethnography, and Contemporary Chinese Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995); Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: British Film Institute, 1997); Nick Browne, and others, *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

Many of the above list also have some lists in authorial study, as well as many others. Curtis K. Tsui, ‘Subjective Culture and History: The Ethnographic Cinema of Wong Kar-wai’, *Asian Cinema*, 7.2 (1995), 95-96; Jillian Sandell, ‘Reinventing Masculinity: The Spectacle of Male Intimacy in the Films of John Woo’, *Film Quarterly*, 49.4 (Summer 1996), 25-41; Julian Stringer, ‘Your Tender Smiles Give Me Strength’: Paradigms of Masculinity in John Woo’s *A Better Tomorrow* and *The Killer*’, *Screen*, 38.1 (Spring 1997), 25-41.

For Chinese authors, see Liang Shi, ‘The Daoist Cosmic Discourse in Zhang Yimou’s “To Live”’, *Film Criticism*, 24.2 (1996), 2-16; and Tonglin Lu, ‘The Zhang Yimou Model’, *Journal of Modern Literature in Chinese*, 3.1 (1999), 1-21.

¹⁰⁴ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.49 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttshbm>> [accessed 22 June 2022].

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always live in a grey area between existence and acceptance.¹⁰⁵ Other auteurs who were analysed in those years included King Hu, Michael Hui, Tsui Hark, and Ann Hui. Chinese authorship also drew interest from scholars in the West at that time, mainly through the works of China's Fifth Generation, especially Zhang Yimou and Chen Kaige, or New Taiwan Cinema by Hou Hsiao-hsien, Ang Lee and Tsai Ming Liang. Olivia Khoo also notes on the authorial study of high-profile directors like Wong Kar-wai, Chen Kaige, Hou Hsiao-Hsien and Hirokazu Kore-eda have often been made to serve in the field of Asian cinema studies as representatives of Asian national cinema industries.¹⁰⁶ Following the Chinese-speaking film auteurs, the works of New Iranian Cinema such as Abbas Kiarostami or Mohsen Makhmalbaf also gained similar attention.¹⁰⁷ By the mid-2000s, the authorship of South Korean directors like Lee Chang-dong, Kim Ki-duk, Park Chan-wook, Bong Joon-ho was being analysed academically in the contexts of violence, masculinity and affect theory.¹⁰⁸

Along with the theorization of Asian authorship, the concept of transnationalism has also been brought into discussion since the emergence of Asian cinema studies in the 1990s, partly due to the fact that the rise of these movies already involved movement from the east to the west. Esther C.M. Yao has explored Hong Kong cinema beyond its territory by connecting it to global relations, through the lens of New Wave auteurs like Tsui Hark, Ann Hui, and Wong Kar-wai, which depict experimental syncretism, citation and remaking of cultural materials, mixed locations, and cross-cultural collaboration.¹⁰⁹ The films of Zhang Yimou have also been scrutinized in the framework of transnational capital, contrasting to the national and cultural critique in the movie texts themselves.¹¹⁰ Director Ang Lee was also investigated in terms of his diasporic identity and displacement as a Taiwanese film director while working in Hollywood.¹¹¹ Anne T. Ciecko has

¹⁰⁵ Ackbar Abbas and others, *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Dis VOIR, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Khoo, p.2.

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy and Verena Andermatt Conley, 'On Evidence: "Life and Nothing More," by Abbas Kiarostami', *Discourse*, 21.1 (1999), 77-88; Rose Issa and Sheila Whitaker, *Life and Art the New Iranian Cinema* (see above at n.95).

¹⁰⁸ Seung-hoon Jeong, 'A Generational Spectrum of Global Korean Auteurs: Political Matrix and Ethical Potential', in *The Global Auteur: The Politics of Authorship in 21st Century Cinema* (see above at n.46).

¹⁰⁹ Esther C. M. Yao, *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

¹¹⁰ Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, 'National Cinema, Cultural Critique, Transnational Capital: The Films of Zhang Yimou', in *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (see above at n.103), pp.105-136.

¹¹¹ Wei Ming Dariotis and Eileen Fung, 'Breaking the Soy Sauce Jar: Diaspora and Displacement in the Films of Ang Lee', in *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (see above at n.103), pp.187-220. 3

explored the action genre in relation to transnationalism through the work of John Woo.¹¹² In general, however, it can be argued that most of the debates on Asian author cinema during those years were embedded with textual analysis with the focus on single creative identities. Some more recent Asian arthouse directors, from Tsai Ming-Liang and Hou Hsian-Hsien to Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Philippine director Lav Diaz, have also been discussed in terms of their use of long-take techniques as authorial signatures in world cinema.¹¹³

Some studies have explored the global rise of Asian filmmakers in terms of industrial practices. Kaushik Bhaumik combines both methods in his argument that the Indian director Anurag Kashyap is an example of a film-entrepreneur auteur.¹¹⁴ By using multiple locations, expressive bodily changes, and sensory confusion – as Bhaumik puts it, a ‘sensorially visceral style of filmmaking’¹¹⁵ – Kashyap represents his experience as a migrant filmmaker, first from Delhi to Mumbai, and then from India to the global industry. Through the study of paratexts like festival literature, video promotional materials, and user-generated YouTube clips, Wikanda Promkuntong finds that the global reputations of three Asians auteurs – Apichatpong, ‘a modernist auteur as part of the festival branding’; Kim Ki-duk, a cult figure with a reputation created by the longtime promotion of influential distributors; and Wong Kar-wai, a fan-based auteur figure – are all driven by what Pierre Bourdieu defines as ‘networks of relationship.’¹¹⁶ Ran Ma also pays attention to both textual and extratextual elements in her research on the authorship of independent border-crossing cinema-makers who were either born or grew up and have worked across both East Asian and Southeast Asian spaces. Although she emphasizes more analysis in the form and themes of the movies, rather than contextual focus, these filmmakers’ micro-practices (independent) and projects (‘border-crossing films’) are ‘both locally situated *and* contingently embedded in the translocal (local-to-local), and transnational network of production, circulation, and exhibition,’¹¹⁷ (emphasis original). Despite the flexible interplay and tensions between ‘identities/subjectivities, mobilities, and localities’, the ‘auteur/author’ still

¹¹² Anne T. Ciecko, ‘Transnational Action: John Woo, Hong Kong, Hollywood’, in *Transnational Chinese Cinema: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (see above at n.103), pp.221-238.

¹¹³ Marco Grosoli, ‘Space and Time in the Land of the End of History Contradiction’, in *The Global Auteur: The Politics of Authorship in 21st Century Cinema* (see above at n.46), pp.303-322.

¹¹⁴ Kaushik Bhaumik, ‘Migration and Contemporary Indian Cinema: A Consideration of Anurag Kashyap and *la politique des auteurs* in the Times of Globalization,’ in *The Global Auteur: The Politics of Authorship in 21st century Cinema* (see above at n.46), pp.287-302 (p.296).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.291.

¹¹⁶ Wikanda Promkhunthong, abstract.

¹¹⁷ Ma, p.28.

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plays the role of an 'actor/agency' whose authorship is constructed through the 'horizontal encounter between local, national, and regional cinema cultures and film industries.'¹¹⁸

Arguably, due to the arrival of globalization and digitalization, it might be difficult for global filmmakers to avoid these kinds of factors. Spanish filmmaker Javier Rebollo has expanded a national focus in Spanish cinema, commonly seen in the works of the previous generation, into a wider scope of transnationalism by hybridizing international cultures and identities. His works portrays themes of journeys, encounters between physical and social spaces, non-place settings, and the negotiation of identity through accents and languages. Like many global auteurs, Rebollo depends on international co-productions and film festivals. His authorship is shaped through both his personal signature and his discursive dependence.¹¹⁹ Global auteurism is also seen as a collective identity shared by a generation of filmmakers.¹²⁰ Seung-hoon Jeong, for example, looks at the achievements of several South Korean '386 generation' auteurs – Park Chan-wook, Kim Ki-duk, Lee Chang-dong, and Boon Joon-ho – whose global prominence has been guided by their political and social background in South Korean society. The so-called '386 generation' means those who were born in the 1960s, were in higher education in the 1980s when they fought against the military government and were in their thirties when the South Korean economy took off. In any transformation of a national film industry, the change-makers often emerge as a group – identified as a new wave – so that their collective achievement can be evident.

After the growth of national and authorial arguments, new approaches have been proposed to redefine, renegotiate, and revisit Asian cinema as a centre of discussion, from 'Asian identity'¹²¹ to 'poly-Asian continental cinematic consciousness'¹²² and regionalization.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.40

¹¹⁹ Manuel Palacio, Juan Carlos Ibañez and Lerau Bret, 'A New Model for Spanish Cinema. Authorship and Globalization: The Films of Javier Rebollo', trans. by Bret Lerau, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 16.1 (2015), 29-43 (p.30) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2015.1042323>> [accessed 10 February, 2018].

¹²⁰ Seung-hoon Jeong, *A Generational Spectrum of Global*, p.6.

¹²¹ More details on Stephen Teo, *The Asian Cinema Experience: Styles, Spaces, Theory* (London: Routledge, 2012); Shekhar Deshpande and Meta Mazaj, *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2018).

¹²² Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park, 'The Desire for a Poly-Asian Continental Film Movement', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Asian Cinema*, ed. by Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park, Gina Marchetti, and See Kam Tan (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), pp.15-52.

¹²³ More details can be found from the books by Olivia Khoo and Ran Ma.

In Thailand, the concept of authorship has long been used to evaluate film quality primarily in terms of individual craftsmanship. For example, the country's Culture Ministry gives two annual awards to young and veteran artists – the Silpathorn Award and the National Artist of Thailand respectively – in which the criteria is always based on authorial supremacy. Film events tend to be programmed according to criteria of authorship – not only directorial artistry but also that of other creative participants.¹²⁴ During 2014 and 2017 the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration's Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre ran a special program called Cinema Diverse, selecting the favourite films of directors and other film crew such as scriptwriters, production designers, sound designers, and editors. Both Pen-ek and Apichatpong are considered film auteurs and have many fans in Thailand who later became directors. (Interestingly, director fans of Pen-ek and Apichatpong tend to be split into two camps. Genre-oriented directors prefer Pen-ek's works, while Apichatpong is the favourite of the independents.) In Thai academia, auteur studies have just taken off in the last two decades, possibly due to a lack of resources in previous periods.¹²⁵ The limited development of film studies nevertheless problematizes the interpretation of theoretical works in Thailand. Apichatpong's cinema is read as if it treats narrative structure in the same way as is employed in mainstream films, except that it lacks complexity.¹²⁶ Usuma Sukhvasti describes the interplay between neorealism and surrealism, the use of repetition and contemplative modes of reference in Apichatpong's works, all of which prompt the audience to acknowledge their mediating viewing experience so that the audience can break 'the fourth wall.'¹²⁷ Anocha is seen to pay more attention to social and political issues, especially human rights, by breaking down her narratives into non-chronological, repetitive and non-associative forms, and through slow camera movement and editing.¹²⁸ Pen-ek, influenced by 'European film noir', prefers to adopt 'neorealist' traits to convey meaning through minimal dialogue and simple cinematography and editing, while Apichatpong has developed a complex non-chronological form of narration and long take cinematography in his combination of neorealism and magic

¹²⁴ Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre, '*BACC Digital Archive Searching*', Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre, [n.d.] <<https://en.bacc.or.th/archive/collection/>> [accessed 14 April 2019].

¹²⁵ The study of Thai auteurs prior to those of the last decades is limited to 1950s figure Thae Prakasvudhisarn, mainly a cinematographer and hardly known outside Thailand, 1970s social-critique pioneer Prince Chatreechalem Yukol, and Bandit Ritthakol, best known for his hit comedy series in the 1980s. Studies on art cinema auteurs have just been made in the last two decades.

¹²⁶ Kemika Jindawong, 'Analysis of Narrative Structure in the Films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul' (unpublished paper, Chiang Mai University, 2008), abstract <<http://cmuir.cmu.ac.th/handle/6653943832/13361>> [accessed 26 October 2019].

¹²⁷ Usuma Sukhvasti, 'The Study of Thai Independent Films That Won Awards Internationally during 2000-2012', *Institute of Culture and Arts Journal*, 17.2 (2016), 71-80 (p.74)

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.76.

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realism.¹²⁹ Outside Thailand, the academic study of Thai cinema has just started in the last two decades after the emergence of New Thai Cinema, and it remains limited to a few topics: authorship (especially Apichatpong), horror, martial arts, and queer theory.¹³⁰ Other directors that have been in focus include Pen-ek.¹³¹

Considering the growth of global authorship in other small film industries, the development of Asian cinema studies in the last three decades, and the emergence of Thai cinema studies, my dissertation will try to blend all of these factors into a study of how authorship functions in today's global art cinema. I will now look at how the discourse of art cinema has changed according to the transformation of authorship, and how Thai art cinema is situated in the Thai and international contexts.

1.2 Defining art cinema in Thai and global contexts

Although the term 'art cinema' has long been used in journalism, academia, and film industries, including in Thailand, it remains difficult to define, entangled with instability and lack of clarity. Art cinema has normally referred to something in opposition to Hollywood's film genres. In film theory, arguments about art cinema have flowed in many directions. Two seminal essays – David Bordwell's 'Art Cinema as a Mode of Practice' and Stephen Neale's 'Art Cinema as Institution' – are often taken as entry points into the debates.

Bordwell sees authorship as a matter of aesthetics. Using the European post-war auteurs and New Wave directors as examples, Bordwell defines realism as constituting shooting in real locations, demonstrating real problems, featuring realistic characters – who manifest different aspects of psychological intensity, preferably conveyed through reaction rather than action, presenting their feelings as 'therapy and cure' – and playing with the film's 'spatial and temporal construction.'¹³² In relation to auteurism, the author provides a signature, normally as a sign of

¹²⁹ Khemmapat Pacharawich, 'Thai Non-mainstream Film and Mirror Image of Social Issues' (unpublished thesis, Burapha University, 2016), pp.160-162 <http://www.thai-explore.net/file_upload/submitter/file_doc/f621e2e92802ba1bfb9ef3562ac8a09d.pdf> [9 July 2022].

¹³⁰ For horror, see Mary J. Ainslie, Katarzyna Ancuta, Adam Knee, and Soon Ng. For action, see Leon Hunt and Pattana Kitiarsa. For Thai queer film, see Milagros Expósito-Barea, Nguyen Tan Hoang, and Brett Farmer.

¹³¹ Adam Knee, 'Gendering the Thai Economic Crisis: The Films of Pen-ek Ratanaruang', *Asian Cinema*, 14.2 (2003), 102-122.

¹³² Bordwell, pp.776-7.

authorial commentary, in the text. But this does not mean that a movie must represent the author's biographical individualism as the main focus, though some might, exemplified in the case of Apichatpong. Bordwell accepts that combining both elements – realism and authorial aesthetics – is not an easy task, and that a tool of ambiguity is often employed to solve the problem in constructing the storyline in art cinema, in which spectators will be involved in the reading process offered by the directors through a film text. However, Bordwell unnecessarily exaggerates the characteristics of art cinema by distinguishing its aesthetics from modernist cinema,¹³³ by looking at their formal qualities and viewing protocols. What I find useful are Bordwell's concluding remarks on the cinematic development of several great authors themselves, by presenting something of an interim space between the zone of art and modernist cinemas.

Barrett Hodsdon observes a similar existence of authorial expressivity in art and avant-garde cinemas, both of which share individualistic and artistic consciousness. Many of Hodsdon's concepts and approaches seem to develop from Bordwell's essay, such as his remarks on the authorial world-view and vision, which is also addressed in Bordwell's writing,¹³⁴ though Hodsdon invokes them in more detail and with clearer historical grounds. Also, while Bordwell focuses only on narrative methodology, Hodsdon prefers to pay attention to examples of *mise-en-scène*, some of which are also raised as examples in Bordwell's essay. Directors seem to have more power and freedom to control the making of their films, which nevertheless are still subject to limitations. Art cinema slightly stands in-between the mainstream and the avant-garde, enforcing a 'quasi-objective tone,'¹³⁵ and less of a 'fragmented dissolution.' Nevertheless, when he explains the relationship between cinema and other relevant contexts such as film festivals, Hodsdon limits himself only to the contexts of art cinema. This binary of art-modernist or art-avant-garde cinema is not useful in the case of Thailand. Apichatpong's works, for example, can fit into all the categories raised by both Bordwell and Hodsdon – art, modernist, and avant-garde cinemas, even

¹³³ Eleftheria Thanouli points out that Bordwell uses different terms in explaining the concept of Hollywood's 'alternative' – varying from art cinema, historical-materialist and parametric narration in his book *Narration in the Fiction Film*. In his first seminal essay, only the term of 'art cinema and the modernist cinema' were taken to comparison. The term 'historical-materialist' was mentioned only once in the conclusion, with some opening remark for the conceptual development. Source: Eleftheria Thanouli, "'Art Cinema' Narration: Breaking down a Wayward Paradigm', *Scope*, 14 (2009), 1-14 (pp.4, 12) <<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/scope/documents/2009/june-2009/thanouli.pdf>> [accessed 26 October 2019].

¹³⁴ Bordwell, p.782.

¹³⁵ Hodsdon, pp.90-92.

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among scholars themselves. He is a 'modernist',¹³⁶ an ultra-modernist¹³⁷ and a postmodern director,¹³⁸ creating the 'pure'¹³⁹ and 'impure'¹⁴⁰ works. Furthermore, there are other directors in Thailand who work across both genre and art cinema, like Ekachai Uekrongtham (*Beautiful Boxer*, 2003) and Wisit Sasanatieng (*Tears of the Black Tiger*, 2000). Both directors have worked with both studios and independent structures, either locally, regionally, or internationally. But they are still considered as art cinema filmmakers, exemplified in the case of Ekachai, whom Todd Brown, the founder and editor of popular cult blog *screenanarchy.com*, praises as an arthouse director even while discussing his involvement with Dolph Lundgren's *Skin Trade* (2015).¹⁴¹ Thus, this emphasis on *mise-en-scène* and narrative problematizes the characteristics of art cinema, even in Thailand itself.

If the formal properties of art cinema cannot be justified in the case of Thailand, a look at Steve Neale's 'Art Cinema as Institution' might offer more dynamic considerations. Studying the context of the European postwar period when the national cinema industries of France, Germany, and Italy were threatened by the flood of Hollywood pictures, Neale chronicled the institutionalisation of art cinema as operating within both 'national' and 'international' arenas.¹⁴² In most cases, it was institutionalised through state policies for 'national culture,' 'national economy,' 'national industry,' and 'national cinematic traditions,' but also through efforts towards international co-production, distribution, and exhibition. Although Neale does not suggest a direct interrelation between filmic authorship and the institutional mode of art cinema, *auteurism* is often cited as one of the signifiers that differentiates European movies from Hollywood productions. In fact, art cinema acquires a similar value to the literary works of writers such as Eliot, Mann, and Tolstoy.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ Yuangyuan Wang, 'Bifurcated Time: Aesthetics and Politics of Apichatpong Weerasethakul' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2014), p.1.

¹³⁷ May Adadol Ingawanij and Richard Lowell MacDonald, 'Blissfully Whose?: Jungle Pleasures, Ultra-modernist Cinema and the Cosmopolitan Thai Auteur', in *The Ambiguous Allure of the West: Traces of the Colonial in Thailand*, ed. by Rachel Harrison and Peter Jackson (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), pp.119-134 (p.119) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xwbmf.12>> [accessed 10 February 2019].

¹³⁸ Brett Farmer, 'Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Transnational Poet of the New Thai Cinema: *Blissfully Yours/Sud Sanaeha*', *Senses of Cinema*, 38 (February, 2006) <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2006/cteq/blissfully_yours> [accessed 4 January 2021] (para.2 of 6).

¹³⁹ May Adadol Ingawanij and Richard Lowell MacDonald, p.122.

¹⁴⁰ Wikanda Promkhunthong, p.79.

¹⁴¹ Todd Brown, 'Dolph Lundgren Taps *Beautiful Boxer* Director for SKIN TRADE', *Screenanarchy.com*, 21 June 2013 <<https://screenanarchy.com/2013/06/dolph-lundgren-taps-beautiful-boxer-director-for-skin-trade.html>> [accessed 1 January 2019].

¹⁴² Steve Neale, 'Art Cinema as Institution', *Screen*, 22.1 (1981), 11-39 (pp.34-5).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.13.

An authorial voice and signature are signified in the inscription process in which art film is evaluated through its texts. Neale even lists a broader category of art cinema directors than those in Bordwell's collection, from neo-realism to Fellini, from Dreyer and Bergman to Bertolucci and Chabrol, from the radical avant-garde of Antonioni, Godard and Resnai to Visconti, De Sica and Truffaut.¹⁴⁴ András Bálint Kovács also advocates the notion of art cinema as 'an institutionalized film practice,' referring to certain kinds of film genres and production companies, narrative methods, the specialization of distribution and exhibition, film journals, critics and particular groups of audiences.¹⁴⁵ Rosanna Maule also elaborates the term 'author cinema' in tandem with 'institutional models,'¹⁴⁶ rejecting the notion of an 'author-informed' perspective in which cinematic elements are usually explored textually, intertextually, and contextually in order to find a film director's underlying motifs and style. By adopting Janet Staiger's method of 'a sociology-of-production'¹⁴⁷ in examining post-1980s films in France, Italy and Spain, Maule associates film authorship with 'the interplay of cultural politics and economic structures in national film systems.'¹⁴⁸ Since the height of the French New Wave's 'politique des auteurs', author cinema had been institutionalised through national film systems such as funding, but also educational film institutions, exhibition (through film festivals), the rise of cinephilia and film criticism.¹⁴⁹ By the 1970s and 1980s, audio-visual industries like national television networks had been added to the list in the institutionalised process of European author cinema.¹⁵⁰

David Andrews, on the other hand, justifies the application of Neale's institutional category of art cinema into contemporary contexts. While Neale's theory focuses on the post-war production mode of European cinema, Andrews has incorporated it into more recent modes of exhibition and reception. An institution, according to David Andrews, is to be understood as something that is collectively constructed by society and retained through a period of time.¹⁵¹ It is shaped by rules, standards, and guidelines, which are established during the process of institutionalization,

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁴⁵ András Bálint Kovács, *Screening Modernism: European Art Cinema, 1950-1980* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p.21. ProQuest EBook Central.

¹⁴⁶ Maule, p.17.

¹⁴⁷ Staiger, pp.40-3.

¹⁴⁸ Maule, p.32.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.33-8.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.39-42.

¹⁵¹ David Andrews, *Theorizing Art Cinemas: Foreign, Cult, Avant-garde, and Beyond* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2013), p.174. ProQuest EBook Central.

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and which need to be scrutinized under a framework of ‘thinking institutionally.’ The contemporary institutions of art cinema have expanded to include art houses, film festivals, and academic film studies, in addition to production mechanisms and state policies that have played significant roles in past decades. In terms of exhibition, the notion of the film author – together with other signifiers of universalism – helped film festivals facilitate ‘the international flow of cultural and economic capital on which they depended.’¹⁵² The auteur theory was also used by scholars to institutionalize film studies, especially through the Anglophone ‘crossover forums’ in the US and Britain. These ‘crossover forums’ are seen as ‘subcultural legitimacy’ that crucially endows the discipline with ‘an accessible and respectable sense of rigor.’¹⁵³

Eleftheria Thanouli problematizes both debates as inadequate to the present contexts of cinema, which are complicated by the roles of globalization. Neale’s institutional category of art cinema has led, she claims, to a misconception that all the films in an arthouse or a film festival should be regarded as ‘art.’ On the other hand, Bordwell’s narrational methodology is seen as harking back to a classical framework, reliant on ambiguous evaluation using formalist judgements. To correspond to the changing world, some traditional paradigms need to be re-examined and realigned – from the centre to the periphery, from the dominant (classical) to other alternative frameworks – and Thanouli explores such possibilities by using the new American ‘smart’ film, the Danish Dogme 95 movement, and New Iranian Cinema as some examples. In other words, she distances herself from the old concept of art cinema as a grand narrative paradigm¹⁵⁴ by re-evaluating and discovering some new models from a peripheral perspective. Nevertheless, her main arguments do not totally reject Bordwell’s approaches, instead reusing them in a modern context. While she is dubious about the significance of the author-art film nexus, her case studies are merely transcended from individual expression to collective creativities. Ironically, the new narrative strategies resulting from the study of those three cases are predominantly extended from the 1960s and 1970s European art cinema to contemporary authorial culture.

Beyond these two streams of thoughts, art cinema has been defined with a diversity of meaning and discursive determinations. Debates about ‘art cinema’ are often arguments as to whether it is comparable to a genre. For the French filmmaker Germain Dulac, art cinema is not a quality or

¹⁵² Ibid., p.182.

¹⁵³ According to Andrews, crossover forums refer to film magazines like *Cahiers du cinema*, *Movie*, *Film Quarterly*, which helped the growth of auteur theory in the 1950s and to date. Ibid., pp.184-190.

¹⁵⁴ Thanouli, p.11.

a genre, but a category of film ‘that wants to be commercial but not enough...,’ and this is the first detectable sign of the emergence of a particular type of film – ‘the intermediate category.’¹⁵⁵ Although disagreements often occur over the categorization of art cinema as a genre, many others insist on its possibility to be defined in some particular contexts. Simon Hobbs, for example, sees in art cinema the characteristics of a ‘commercial label’ or a genre. Those characteristics include its ‘flexibility as a catch-all term,’¹⁵⁶ ‘a load signifier’ of a product with ‘a set of connotations and expectations’,¹⁵⁷ its ‘communal sense of cultural prestige’,¹⁵⁸ as well as ‘a particular group of audience’.¹⁵⁹ All in all, art cinema for him is ‘a marketing label’ that has a potential to promote ‘a particular ‘kind’ of ‘highbrow’, complex, and often transgressive cinematic product.’¹⁶⁰

What should be considered as ‘Thai art cinema’ then? In the cases of the aforementioned crossover directors like Ekachai or Wisit, Bordwell and Hodsdon’s aesthetic guidelines, and Thanouli’s bottom-up approach, are not very compatible with the properties of Thai art cinema. Few Thai films fully oppose themselves to Hollywood conventions of narrative or genre, though they can be ambivalent about certain styles. The institutional paradigm, proposed by Neale and updated by Andrews, is also not fully applicable to the Thai case. Funding sources, for example, are not particularly institutionalized, and money is raised from wherever it can be – from local and international studios, domestic and foreign corporations, and from both private and state funds. In fact, it can be argued that the concept of art cinema was introduced into Thai film culture at the time of the birth of New Thai Cinema. The term used to be applied more to quality foreign films being screened in the country. Thai people have long been exposed to the post-war art cinema of Japan, Italian neorealism, and the French New Wave – all of which were distributed as part of the post-war bilateral agreement between Thailand and the US. Other national cinemas

¹⁵⁵ Germaine Dulac, cited in Kovács, p.22,

¹⁵⁶ Jill Forbes and Sarah Street (2000), *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p.40, cited in Simon Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema: Text, Paratext and Home Video Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p.4 <DOI:10.3366/edinburgh/9781474427371.001.0001> [accessed 27 August 2020].

¹⁵⁷ Galt and Schoonover, p.13, cited in Simon Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, p.4.

¹⁵⁸ Andrews, p.22, cited in Simon Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, p.4.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Tudor, ‘Genre’, 1977, pp.21-2, cited in Simon Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, p.4.

¹⁶⁰ Simon Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, pp.4-5.

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also benefited from this policy.¹⁶¹ During the official launch of first art-house cinema in the mid-1990s, the term 'art cinema' was avoided by the founder, Mongkol Cinema, and its two critics-turned-programmers Sananjit Bangsaphan and Suthakorn Santithavach. They preferred to call it 'alternative,' showing films like Steve James' *Hoop Dreams* (1994), Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies* (1996), and Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking* (1995).¹⁶² Previously, the term 'art cinema' had rarely been used by Thai cineastes, even among the generation of the 1970s Thai New Wave, which has tended to be classified according to its storylines, rather than its formal properties, as 'social-critique cinema.' Despite having been exhibited at film festivals like Berlin or Hawaii, these works have rarely been called 'art cinema,' either in Thai journalism or academia. Notably, it was Apichatpong who introduced the term when he set up the Bangkok International Art Film Festival in 1997.

Thai art cinema needs to be defined according to its own particular contexts and discourses. As it is an emergent concept that is strongly identified with global modes of film practice, it is useful to consider Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover's concept of a modified art cinema in relation to global visions. In general common usage, art cinema is defined as follows:

feature-length narrative films at the margins of mainstream cinema, located somewhere between fully experimental films and overtly commercial products. Typical (but not necessary) features include foreign production, overt engagement of the aesthetic, unrestrained formalism, and a mode of narration that is pleasurable but loosened from classical structures and distanced from its representations. By classical standards, the art film might be seen as too slow or excessive in its visual style, use of colour, or characterization.¹⁶³

The above definition manifests elements of both the aesthetic – something between experimental and commercial works - and institutional approaches – foreign productions - to a theory of art cinema. It also reflects somewhat Simon Hobbs' notion of the term as serving a marketing purpose, in that Galt and Schoonover emphasize that art cinema tends not to stray too far from notions of cinematic pleasure and comprehensibility. They also see art cinema as 'a category' that pertains to 'flexibility', 'hybridity', 'retrograde', 'indispensability' and

¹⁶¹ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, *Khwaam Samnuekruam Nai Phattanakarn Silpa Lae Karnwijarn Khong Thai 2475-2550: Papphayon* [Common Awareness in the Evolution of Thai Art and Criticism: Significant Milestones 1932-2007: Cinema] (Bangkok: Thailand Research Fund, 2019b), pp.31-33.

¹⁶² Anchalee Chaiworaporn and Parinyaporn Pajee, 'Opening Up a Fountainhead', *The Nation*, 5 July 1996, section C, p. C2.

¹⁶³ Galt and Schoonover, p.6.

'instability'.¹⁶⁴ Accounts like this view art cinema as 'impure' in many respects – impure in regard to 'institutional space' (referring to its position between mainstream and experimental), its relationship to 'location' (embodying international and cosmopolitan values and addressing itself to foreign target audiences) and the 'critical and industrial categories that sustain film history' (different features of industrial production such as stardom and authorship), its troubles with the notion of genre, and its 'impure spectators' (changing across time and space).¹⁶⁵ Because the meaning of art cinema is so flexible, diverse and dependent on many other factors, several modes of address are tackled by both scholars in the forms of binary contrasts. For example, the characteristics of art cinema are changeable according to geographical difference, which then leads to geopolitical contestations. For example, a popular movie might be considered a commercial product in its country of origin, but becomes art cinema when it is exhibited elsewhere. Some more avant-garde forms of art cinema are more accepted in Europe than in Asia, leading Asian filmmakers to choose to prioritize their films' exposure in western venues than in Asian spaces – something exemplified by the case of Anocha Suwichakornpong. Art cinema is also stimulated by both historical and ahistorical conditions, which means it is exposed both to a 'historical importance and a contemporary currency.'¹⁶⁶ For example, the emergence of each new national art cinema merely repeats and extends the established cycle of new waves declared and promoted by film festival circuits. With the evolution of global art cinema, authorship is still considered important, with each film potentially 'a platform for political agency.'¹⁶⁷ As a result, global art cinema 'intersects industry, history, and textuality,' and connects the ideas of 'international aesthetics, critical, and industrial institutions,'¹⁶⁸ which supports my multimodal approaches in this study.

It can be argued that contemporary Thai art cinema is identified through the paradigms of institutionalization, authorship, exhibition, and reception, as well as formal production practices. Put simply, it is associated with a mode of funding, film festivals, directorial names, certain kinds of reception, and some formal production traits. As elsewhere in the world, Thai art films depend on international and local funding, which will be explained in detail in the chapters on Apichatpong and Anocha. Such films are usually released in the major 'auteur' international film

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.3-6.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp.7-9.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.5.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.20.

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festivals like Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Rotterdam and Locarno, which promote their directors as so-called arthouse filmmakers, despite the fact that some of them might also work on genre films produced by Thai studios. The style of the films sits between the mainstream and the avant-garde, depending on each director's signature. Apichatpong's avant-garde style is also called as art cinema as a whole. Therefore, despite the post-structuralist claims of the death of auteur, authorship is still important for many art cinema-makers to make it at the global level. To conclude, the contemporary Thai art cinema is mutually and bilaterally interdependent with institutions of production, exhibition, and reception, which can arguably affect or be reinforced by each director's authorial identity.

Art cinema has long been explored in relation to national cinema discourse and somewhat embedded with an international dimension, as stated in Steve Neale's seminal essay. But what is interesting in Galt and Schoonover's approach is the use of 'a comparativist impulse and transnational tenor'¹⁶⁹ as a framework to respond to the changing paradigm of contemporary global art cinema, despite no clear suggestion of the methodology addressed by the scholars. We know only that we should integrate industrial, textual, and historical approach in the analysis. Stephen Crofts' suggestion of national cinema categories offers a useful start. Although Crofts proposes several factors as the means of analysis – that is, production, distribution and exhibition, audiences, discourses, textuality, national-cultural specificity, the cultural specificity of genres and nation-state cinema 'movements, the role of the state, and the global range of nation-state cinemas'¹⁷⁰ – he still relies on production as a main criteria for categorizing the 'nation-state cinema' into eight varieties, which are: United States cinema, Asian commercial successes, other entertainment cinemas, totalitarian cinemas, art cinemas, international co-productions, Third Cinemas and sub-state cinemas. There are some traces of a transnational perspective in his concept, as we can see from the categories of United States cinema, Asian commercial successes, and other entertainment cinemas. But his transnational dialogues are still restricted by the limited flows of transnational cinema that circulated from the post-war years to the mid-1990s. Asian commercial successes, for example, consisted of only Hong Kong and Indian cinemas. Such categories as the totalitarian cinemas and Third cinemas also signify the post-war anti-fascist pattern, the communist movies of China and the USSR, and Latin America's anti-imperialist cinemas. The art cinema category is also mixed with American art, and art for socialist export,

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.7.

¹⁷⁰ Stephen Crofts, 'Concepts of National Cinema', in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (see above at n.42), pp.385-394 (p.390).

each of which is distinguished from one another by the difference of state control and the characteristics of their respective markets. Art cinema is considered as having minimal market value and as prioritizing cultural objectives instead. Crofts' model was revised a decade later, with the re-classification of national cinema into seven types: European-model art cinemas, Third cinema, Third World and European commercial cinemas, ignoring Hollywood, imitating Hollywood, totalitarian cinemas, and regional/ethnic cinemas.¹⁷¹ To some extent, this model can be used for a typology of Thai cinema, involving the arts cinema, sub-state cinemas or regional/ethnic cinemas. Nevertheless, Crofts' categorization somewhat overstates the international political and economic overdetermination, rather than local bottom-up and international contextual approaches.

If we go further towards a model where the discourse of production, reception, and film culture is used as the foundation for analysis, Dudley Andrew's 'optiques'¹⁷² paradigm might be a challenging point to start. Andrew incorporates constituents such as criticism, government support or regulation, advertising and exhibition strategies to categorize cinema into three optiques – national folk films, global entertainment movies, and international art cinema. Generally speaking, Andrew's concise optiques can be partially modified with the Thai film context. Thai arts cinema can refer to his definition of international art cinema. Nation folk films can refer to the movies that are able to reach mass audiences in both Bangkok and the provinces but are not expected to be seen by anybody outside Thailand. Arguably, Andrew's system doesn't quite account for other types of films made in Thailand, such as those studio films that have international reach in the Southeast Asian region but cannot be said to be global. Since the birth of New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s, Southeast Asia has become the main market of Thai cinema, especially Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei. The market has somewhat shifted to Indochinese countries like Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Burma, which have modernized their entertainment industries in the last decade,¹⁷³ as many theatres in Laos and

¹⁷¹ Stephen Crofts, 'Reconceptualising National Cinema/S', in *Theorising National Cinema* (see above at n.101), pp.44-58.

¹⁷² Dudley Andrew, 'Foreword', in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (see above at n.29), pp.x-xi.

¹⁷³ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, *Karn Jad Jamnai lae talad phabphayon Thai nai tangprathet* [The International Distribution and Market of Thai Cinema] (Bangkok: Ministry of Culture, 2014), pp.37-62.

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Cambodia are run by Thai conglomerates who vertically invest in production, distribution and exhibition.¹⁷⁴

Both Crofts and Andrew take industrial modes of practice – production, distribution, and exhibition, or some of the film culture (such as government support) – into consideration. But in the Thai context, some of these factors are problematized by the tension between the local and the global. Productions can be categorized as studio or independent, but the latter is a highly diverse field which includes film students, special interest groups (such as queer filmmakers), commercially oriented independent producers and art filmmakers.¹⁷⁵ Funding sources are relatively unstructured, and government support has been allocated to both blockbuster heritage films directed by industry veterans and to art cinema. If we want to take distribution and exhibition into account, the same theatres often show both studios and arthouse cinemas. In other words, some arthouse theatres also show popular movies, while some multiplexes also run special arthouse programs.

As contemporary Thai art cinema is part of an international system of film festivals, a transnational approach is required. Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim¹⁷⁶ suggest an interesting view of the three main patterns in the existing debate over transnational cinema. The first prefers a transnational model to understand questions of production, distribution, and exhibition, rather than a national approach that limits the understanding of how films can be intended to cross borders. The second considers the transnationalism of a certain group of films with a ‘shared cultural heritage’, and/or ‘geo-political boundary’, such as Chinese-speaking movies. The final approach challenges the western construction of national culture by focusing on diasporic, exilic and postcolonial cinemas. Higbee and Lim advocate a ‘critical transnationalism’ approach, though it is still unclear what particularities their strategy will take into consideration. They merely suggest that transnational dialectics should be brought in so that we can understand the

¹⁷⁴ Major Cineplex, ‘Thurakij phabphayon [Theatre business]’, *Major Cineplex*, [n.d.] <<https://investor.majorcineplex.com/th/business-characteristics/cinema-business>> [accessed 23 June 2022].

¹⁷⁵ This is justified from my previous essay on the round-up of Thai cinema in 2014. Anchalee Chaiworaporn, ‘Everybody can Make a Movie: Thai Cinema in 2014’, *Far East Film Festival*, [n.d.] <<https://www.fareastfilm.com/eng/archive/catalogue/2015/chiunque-puo-girare-un-film-il-cinema-thailandese-nel-2014/?IDLYT=31711>> [accessed 26 June 2022].

¹⁷⁶ Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, ‘Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies’, *Transnational Cinemas*, 1:1 (2010), 7-21, p.9 <DOI: 10.1386/trac.1.1.7/1 > [accessed 26 June 2022].

confrontations between stakeholders in each ‘transnational trajectory’,¹⁷⁷ either in a film’s texts or production process. Through this paradigm, no groups will be confined into any separate spaces.

In defining Thai art cinema, no single approach is appropriate, either the methods proposed by Crofts or Andrew, or Higbee and Lim’s unclear strategy. At the same time, Galt and Schoonover’s notions of geography and geopolitics, as well as historical and ahistorical perspectives, are also useful. In consequence, in defining Thai art cinema – in comparison to other film categories in the nation – I would apply both historical and contemporary perspectives, as well as local, regional, and global contexts. Within the local context, Thai film-going practices have reflected the class identities of audiences. Boonrak Boonyaketmala,¹⁷⁸ one of a few noted film academics in the country, raises the problem of intellectuals’ criticism of the 16mm films made in the post-war period, labelling them as *nam nao*, literally meaning ‘stagnant water.’ Even the country’s 1970s leader Field Marshall Praphat Charusathian and the national committee that was organized to help the film industry were cited for this denunciation. In the past, the class of filmgoers could be identified from the movie theatres they patronized. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, theatres were classified into three classes – first class, second class and third class.¹⁷⁹ The first-class category referred to those in Bangkok that showed the first run of a movie. The second-class theatres were located in the main towns of other provinces and hosted second runs of movies after they had played in Bangkok, while the third-class theatres were located in small and remote areas and staged third-run shows. The content of some movies also implied the spectator’s class identity. The nostalgic film *Nang Nak* of the New Thai Cinema pioneer Nonzee Nimibutr is misread as an exemplary instance of Thai heritage cinema for bourgeois Thai viewers and international film festival circuit.¹⁸⁰ In fact, this version of the well-known ghost story, with its traditional images and themes, did not screen widely in western territories, but was very popular domestically and in commercial theatres elsewhere in Asia., becoming the highest-grossing film

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷⁸ Boonrak Boonyaketmala, ‘The Rise and Fall of the Film Industry in Thailand, 1897-1992’, *East-West Film Journal*, 6.2 (1992), 62-98, p.75, 81.

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Economic Affairs, Rai-ngarn kha-na kammakarn rueng karn-srang phabpayont Thai lae karn nam phabpayont tang-pra-thet khao ma chai nai prathes Thai [Report of the Committee for the Study of Film Production and Importation], 1972, p.33.

¹⁸⁰ May Adadol Ingawanij, ‘*Nang Nak*: Thai bourgeois heritage cinema’, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8.2 (2007), 180-193, p.180.

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in Thailand and Singapore.¹⁸¹ Malaysian film critic Hassan Abd Muthalib praised the film as the Thai horror movie that ‘started the horror genre craze in Asia’.¹⁸² In my view, the diversity of Thai film audiences should be brought into the study of contemporary cinema, especially in its convergence of locality, regionality and transnationality. Here, I find Ian Christie’s call for a focus on audience preference in appreciating national cinema to be useful:

Building on the insight by Elsaesser and others that the “national” is intrinsically relational – dependent on who and where the observer is and, on the institutions, involved – the study of national film should cease to be a display of taste and connoisseurship and engage instead with the wealth of empirical studies of audience preference. Nor need this be confined to the present. What remains in the “audience turn” that film studies have taken is to devise and apply similar techniques to discovering how cinema has populated the ‘imagined communities’ of nations – not confining ourselves solely to national production, but alert to the transnational potential of film constantly being appropriated for purposes of local self-definition.¹⁸³

Thai cinema specialist Natalie Boehler supports the notion of studying national cinema in the forms of transnational or regional cinema, due to cultural mobility.¹⁸⁴ However, by applying Christie’s conception, we have to come to agree that Thai art cinema can represent as a symbol of national cinema, contrast to overall perception that it is only a ‘small’ category among the diversity of movies in Thailand. Despite limited audiences in the country, several Thai art films have also represented nationally as nominees for the Academy Awards’ foreign-language film category. What I mean here in employing the roles of audiences is not restricted to demographic factors such as class, income, gender and age, but is to be situated within what Daniele Treveri Gennari, Danielle Hipkins, and Catherine O’Rawe call a ‘New Cinema History’ approach.¹⁸⁵ The paradigm is examined in a multidisciplinary scope, in which history, geography, economics,

¹⁸¹ Liz Shackleton, ‘Ong-Bak Scores on Singapore Debut’, *Screen International*, 2 December 2003 <<https://www.screendaily.com/ong-bak-scores-on-singapore-debut/4016319.article>> [accessed 25 June 2022], para.2 of 4.

¹⁸² Muthalib, p.192.

¹⁸³ Ian Christie, ‘Where Is National Cinema Today (and Do We Still Need It)?’, *Film History: An International Journal*, 25.1-2 (2013), 19-30, p.28 <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/505153/pdf>> [accessed 5 April 2019].

¹⁸⁴ Natalie Boehler, ‘Made in Thailand – Thainess, Performance and Narration in Contemporary Thai Cinema’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Zurich, 2010), p.67.

¹⁸⁵ Daniele Treveri Gennari, Danielle Hipkins, and Catherine O’Rawe, ‘Introduction: Rural Cinema Exhibition and Audiences in a Global Context— Not Just a Slower Transition to Modernity’, in *Rural Cinema Exhibition and Audiences in a Global Context* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1-13, p.2

cultural studies, sociology and anthropology are taken into account, to pay attention to cinema-going experiences that are specific to places, as well as patterns of distribution and exhibition.

Geography as a means of distinguishing groups of audience has long been an element of film theory, and the concept has long been embraced in the interrelation between the cinema, the city, and the rural. Richard Maltby has examined Hollywood audiences of the 1920s and 1930s and concluded that 'taste publics'¹⁸⁶ could be distinguished, mainly in the form of binary contrasts between metropolitan and non-metropolitan (or the hinterland), urban and small-town, 'sophisticated' and 'unsophisticated', 'Broadway' and 'Main Street'. The former groups were eager for the 'unconventional, the subtle and the artistic.' Small-town patrons, on the other hand, were more exposed to conventional human stories and well-established aesthetic techniques. Kate Bowles has studied small-town theatres in Australia, from New South Wales' Illawarra to Victoria's Gippsland, as a part of the overall diversity of that country's cinema market, and finds that Australian cinema audiences play a more significant role in the Australian public sphere than Australian films.¹⁸⁷ Robert Allen makes an interesting point about the intersections of 'local places of cinema-going'¹⁸⁸ as 'internally heterogeneous nodal points' in a geography of cinema, where 'trajectories, networks, trails, and pathways' overlap.

In the case of Thailand, geographical distinctions created the urban-provincial divide of cinema theatres before the birth of multiplexing in 1994. As mentioned earlier, theatres were classified into first, second and third class during the 1960s and 1970s, then merged into two-tiered system of Thai filmgoing and theatres two decades later. In Bangkok and big cities, there had been a steady investment in the building of new stand-alone and mini-theatres, where audiences were offered a variety of films reflecting new tastes and quality output. On the other hand in upcountry Thailand, most theatres were rundown stand-alone cinemas, where audiences were offered movies purely as escapist entertainment,¹⁸⁹ particular Thai and Hong Kong films. It was no

¹⁸⁶ Richard Maltby, R. (1999) 'Sticks, Hicks and Flaps: Classical Hollywood's generic conception of its audiences', in *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies*, ed. by Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: British Film Institute, 1999), pp.23-41 (pp.25-7).

¹⁸⁷ Kate Bowles, 'Three Miles of Rough Dirt Road': Towards an Audience-Centred Approach to Cinema Studies in Australia', *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, 1.3 (2007), 245-260, p.245. <DOI:10.1386/sac.1.3.245_1> [accessed 2 May 2018].

¹⁸⁸ Robert Allen, 'The Place of Space in Film History', *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, 9.2 (2006), 15-27, p.24.

¹⁸⁹ Anchalee, Chaiworaporn, 'Thai Cinema Since 1970', in *Film in Southeast Asia: Views from the Region*, ed. by David Hanan (Hanoi: Vietnam Film Institute, 2001), p.156.

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surprise that the production of B-grade movies rocketed, mostly of which were produced by provincial distributors-cum-theatre-owners based in the north, the northeastern, the eastern, and the south. Due to the arrival of multiplexing, provincial investors have less power today. Many of them closed down their business, while others have collaborated with the two big multiplexing operators in Thailand, Major Cinema and SF Cinema. The changing tastes of local audiences, due to the development of technology, has also led to an influx of television programmes, internet and streaming content. As a result, by incorporating the conceptions of Christie, Gennari et al and Allen together, it could be argued that assumptions about exhibition sites and audiences have significantly overdetermined the classification of Thai cinema. With the global expansion of Thai cinema, these classifications obscure the internal intersections that have expanded into a larger system of global networks of both shared heterogeneous and 'homogenous' cultural, social, and economic sites. As a result, I would typify Thai cinema, from the past to the present, from the indigenous to the global, into seven not mutually exclusive categories: global cinema, Asian regional cinema, international art cinema, mass cinema, urban cinema, provincial cinema, and special interest cinema.¹⁹⁰

Global cinema refers to genre movies with the potential to be hits everywhere, albeit with limited releases in the West in most cases. If they travel to film festivals, it is likely to be genre-oriented events such as the Far East Film Festival in Udine, Italy, or the Toronto International Film Festival's midnight section. The films of action star Tony Jaa (*Ong Bak*, Prachya Pinkaew, 2003; *Tom Yam Goong*, Prachya Pinkaew, 2005), the horror film *Shutter* (Shutter Kod Tid Winyan, Banjong Pisanthanakun, 2004), and highschool thriller *Bad Genius* (Chalad Game Gong, Nattawut Poonpiriya, 2017) fall into this category. *Ong Bak*, with Luc Besson's EuropaCorp handling international sales outside Asian territories, was widely released in the West – 86 screens in the UK, 297 in France, 387 in the United States;¹⁹¹ *Tom Yum Goong*, known in the US as *The Protector*, was released in 1,541 theatres there.¹⁹² *Shutter* and *Bad Genius* were not released in the US, but remake rights to both films were bought by Hollywood.

¹⁹⁰ These categorizations form the basis of my essay 'Diversity in Paradox: From Global to Small Cinemas', *Bangkok Art and Culture Centre E-Journal* 2021, 8-15 <https://www.bacc.or.th/upload/BACC_E-journal%202021.pdf> [accessed 25 June 2022].

¹⁹¹ Box Office Mojo by IMDB Pro, 'Ong Bak: The Thai Warrior', in *Boxofficemojo.com* <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/release/rl2657519105/?ref_=bo_tt_gr_1> [accessed 25 June 2022].

¹⁹² Box Office Mojo by IMDB Pro, 'The Protector', in *Boxofficemojo.com* <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0427954/?ref_=bo_se_r_1> [accessed 25 June 2022].

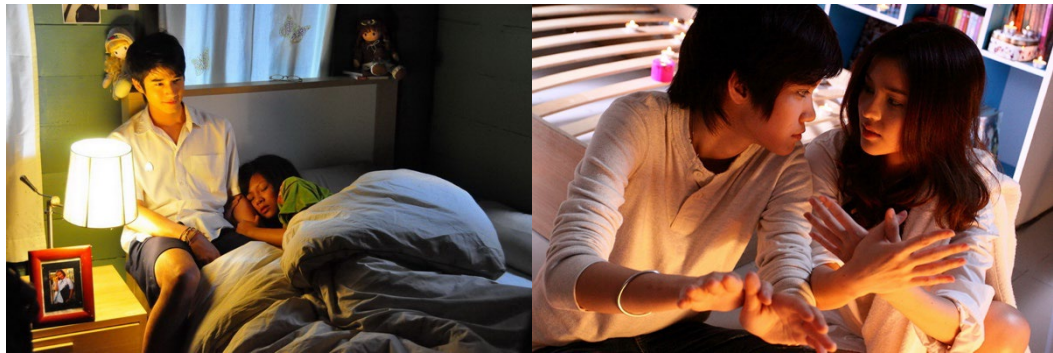


Figure 1.5 Asian regional cinema - *A Little Thing Called Love* (left) and *Yes or No* (right)

Asian regional cinema is in fact the main export sector of Thai cinema, usually covering horror and other genre films targeted at teenage audiences, such as gay high-school romance *Love of Siam* (Rak haeng Siam, Chookiat Sakveerakul, 2007), teen love story *A Crazy Little Thing Called Love* (Sing lek lek thee riak wa ruk, Phuttipong Pormsaka Na-Sakonnakorn, Wasin Pokpong, 2010) and LGBTQ drama *Yes Or No* (Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, 2010) and its 2012 sequel *Yes or No 2: Come Back to Me*. These movies were so successful that several of their Thai stars came to have fan clubs across Asia, and some of the titles were remade in other countries in the region. *A Crazy Little Thing Called Love*, for example, was adapted into a Chinese version, while its lead actor, Mario Maurer, was cast in the Philippine film *Suddenly It's Magic* (2012) and the Taiwanese production *Love on That Day* (2012).

International art cinema covers films that rarely find distribution in Asian markets, except for limited releases in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea. Apichatpong's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, for example, was sold to Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan only.¹⁹³ Rarely screened in mainstream theatres, these films are not well known to the Thai public. Of all the categories, its audience is most difficult to measure in numbers, comprising what might be called, borrowing a term from a noted observer of Thailand and Southeast Asia, Benedict Anderson, the 'imagined community'¹⁹⁴ of Thai art cinema. When *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* won the Palme d'Or in 2010, the 'morale-boosting impact' could be limited, as his fellow director Songyos Sugmakanan, chairman of the Thai Film Directors' Association

¹⁹³ Box Office Mojo by IMDB Pro, 'Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives', in *Boxofficemojo.com* < https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt1588895/?ref=bo_se_r_1 > [accessed 25 June 2022], and IMDB, 'Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives', in *imdb.com* < https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1588895/companycredits?ref=tt_dt_co > [accessed 25 June 2022].

¹⁹⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York: Verso, 2006).

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opined, 'because he does not have a big following in his home country.'¹⁹⁵ These audiences are characterized by cosmopolitan identities and perspectives, rather than local, provincial or national ones, connecting with one another through their responses to particular cinematic considerations, especially authorship. However, the authorship at play in Thai art cinema is increasingly diverse. Arguably, three main modes can be identified: revisiting genre films, employing arthouse traditions, and blending gallery arts with filmmaking.



Figure 1.6 International art cine: *Beautiful Boxer* (left), and *Senior* (right)

The first case involves the deconstruction of Thailand's traditionally popular genres into more experimental forms, as in the works of Wisit Sasanatieng, who shares the same advertising background as Pen-ek. Wisit employs new techniques and rewrites the old Thai-style genres – from action to horror – into a postmodern kind of cinema, exemplified by the garish colours of his tribute to old Thai action films, *Tears of the Tiger* (Fah Talay Jone, 2001), or the stylized acting in *Senior* (Roon Phee, 2015). Another New Thai Cinema contemporary, Ekachai Uekrongtham, brought a new perspective to the sports film genre in *Beautiful Boxer* (2003).

¹⁹⁵ AFP, 'Thailand Hails Welcome Victory at Cannes Film Festival', *The Independent*, 24 May 2010 < <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/thailand-hails-welcome-victory-at-cannes-film-festival-5542639.html> > [assessed 20 March 2019].



Figure 1.7 Arthouse: Sivaroj Kongsakul's *Eternity* (left), and Phuttiaphong Aroonpheng's *Manta Ray*

The second mode is embodied in the emergence of arthouse filmmakers who favour anti-narrative, slow cinema structures, but whose work remains wholly within the feature film format. Their approaches vary from broadly linear narrative patterns punctuated by breaks and schisms to the total disruption or disregard of plots, almost like avant-garde films. Pen-ek Ratanaruang is at the forefront of these filmmaking practices, and most of the independent directors who have emerged since the mid-2000s also belong in this group.



Figure 1.8 Crossover arts: *Syndromes and a Century* (left), and *Anatomy of Time* (right)

Lastly, crossover does not only occur between the realms of mainstream and alternative filmmaking, but also draws in other forms of visual culture, especially video art and installation art. Apichatpong Weerasethakul led the way with his exploration of the different qualities of cinema and gallery films, though his subsequent films belong with the narrative experiments of the previous mode. Jakkrawal Nilthamrong, Nontawat Numbenchapol and Chulayarnnon Siriphol are perhaps the most prominent younger visual artists-cum-filmmakers.

While Thai films are now more appreciated overseas than in the past – both in the realms of pop and high culture – many other films are tailored to local tastes. With so many rival media platforms like television and the internet, film tastes have diversified in a more complex way. In

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today's film culture, which arguably can be categorized into mass, urban, provincial, and special interest audiences, films may be targeted by location in more specific ways. Mass entertainment refers to the movies that are favoured by people across the nation. More exactly, it is the movies that are enjoyed by the working class. There are no definite rules to specify what kinds of movies will fall into this category, but it has often been nationalistic ones, such as the historical epics *Bang Rajan* (Thanit Jitnukul, 2000) and *Suriyothai* (Prince Chatreechalerms Yukol, 2001). On the other hand, horror and comedy are popular across society. Thailand's highest grossing film is *Pee Mak* (Banjong Pisanthanakun, 2013), a comic remake of the Nak ghost story previously adapted by Nonzee, this time from the male perspective.



Figure 1.9 Mass cinema: *Suriyothai* (left), and *Pee Mak* (right)

Many movies are targeted at urban people, whose tastes have shifted over time. Sometimes it was assumed that films likely to succeed in cities were those favoured by intellectuals, such as films of the 1970s made by such directors as Piak Poster or Suphaksorn (Supawat Jongsiri). Nowadays, it goes beyond the student community to the white-collar urban middle class. Provincial cinema aims at local audiences, especially those in the outskirts of Bangkok and in rural areas. They primarily watch dubbed Hollywood films and Thai movies, but with the rise of globalization and modernization in the last few decades, provincial audience are better educated and can be thought of as becoming 'provincial urban'. In the past, this urban-rural division among audiences was hardly measured by official statistics, but it is possible today with the expansion of multiplexes around the country.



Figure 1. 10 Special interest movies: *2Together the Film* (left), and *Poobai Taiban* (right)

Special interest audiences have developed and grown due to the development of digital media and the film schools that have opened in the country. Now it is not only professionals and industry insiders that can make movies, but also students and media-savvy non-professionals, resulting in a diverse range of film output, from documentaries to LGBTQ stories and 'north-eastern-themed' movies. Normally, these films get only limited releases in selected theatres, sometimes with only one slot per screen per day. Some of them, such as the north-eastern-themed movies, are not even shown in Bangkok and are available only in regional or suburban theatres. In other words, they are small films. During the Covid-19 pandemic, these small films have found more opportunities than usual as reluctant audiences mean fewer Hollywood releases and local studio productions in theatres.

The above categories are not mutually exclusive or limited in scope, but cross over one another. Some north-eastern-themed films have widely been released in Bangkok with good results, perhaps due to the high number of north-eastern migrants in Bangkok. Some gay-themed films might attract only Thai gay audiences but can jump to attract LGBTQ communities or wider arthouse audiences around the world, meaning they can become both 'special interest cinema' or 'international art film.' Some popular Thai LGBT films have achieved popularity in China, such as the romantic comedy sequels *Yes or No* (Yak Rak Ko Rak Loei, Sarasawadee Wongsompetch, 2010) – a romance between two college girls. Normally, this kind of LGBT films would be subtitled by film fans, illegally uploaded onto a public site, and shared among social networks. Online fandom made both lead stars, Sucharat Manaying and Suppanad Jittaleela, so popular in China that fan meetings were regularly arranged in those days. Suppanad was cast in a Chinese

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television drama released only in China.¹⁹⁶ In fact, Thai LGBT entertainments – from movies, television dramas and series – have become some of the most popular Thai entertainment exports – known among Chinese as T-Pop – to several Asian countries.

This audience-based categorization of contemporary Thai cinema might provide some challenging insights into the country's film industry, which now reaches beyond its own border to transnational consumption networks. As we see from the Thai experience, some types of film might represent 'peripheral cinema'¹⁹⁷ in their own territory, but turn out to have transnational appeal, in the same way as Galt and Schoonover's observation of some international art cinema also falling within the popular category at home. Furthermore, by this approach, not only art cinema can be situated in the global niche business realm, but other kinds of cinema, exemplified in the 'special interest cinemas.' This might be useful for the future study of transnational cinema as a whole. In this circumstance, I would wrap up my last argument on the notion of 'small cinema,' which might propose a new approach to explaining such kinds of cinema, including Thai art cinema.

1.3 Thinking the transnational smallness of Thai art cinema

The notion of 'small cinema', according to Dina Iordanova, was first suggested by Mette Hjort in her explanation on the global reach of films in Denmark, and then by David Martin-Jones in an exploration of the internationalization of Scottish cinema.¹⁹⁸ Iordanova also articulates its characteristic of 'minor' properties such as in the use of language in this cinema. These two conceptions of small cinema are shared by Janina Falkowska and Lenuta Giukin, who define the phrase in historical terms where it emerged under the 'innovative, and uncompromising' rules of modernism, interlinked with national identity and Eurocentricism.¹⁹⁹ Since the 1990s, small cinema also manifests its 'underprivileged' or 'oppressive' status under the entitlement of 'world

¹⁹⁶ Thai PBS, 'Tina Suppanad as a Lead Female Protagonist in a Chinese Drama', *Thai PBS*, 1 February 2018 < <https://news.thaipbs.or.th/content/269824> > [25 June 2022].

¹⁹⁷ Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belen Vidal, 'Introduction: A Peripheral View of World Cinema', in *Cinema at the Periphery*, ed. by Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belen Vidal Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, pp.1-19.

¹⁹⁸ Dina Iordanova, 'Afterword: Unseen Cinema: Notes on Small Cinemas and the Transnational,' in *Small Cinemas in Global Markets Genres, Identities, Narratives*, ed. by Lenuta Giukin, Janina Falkowska, and David Desser (London: Lexington Books, 2014), pp.259-269 (p.260). EBook Central.

¹⁹⁹ Janina Falkowska and Lenuta Giukin, 'Introduction', in *Small Cinemas in Global Markets Genres, Identities, Narratives* (see above at n.198), pp.vii-xi.

cinema.’ Beyond that, small cinema is flexibly defined. It can be anything related to individualism, featuring non-linear narratives and aesthetics, being associated with regional cinema, and emphasizing politically interests. Smallness can also refer to ‘private’ cinema, filmmaking format, size of audience, production budget, distribution scale, and sites of exhibition. In short:

... They [small cinemas] may be in between smallness and big size in the semantic, pragmatic, and cultural senses. In between seems to be the best term which describes the process of cross-pollination and influence one kind of cinema has on another. Even huge Hollywood behemoths reveal influences from smaller cinemas; liminality then would be the best term expressing these cross-fertilizations.²⁰⁰

In sum, this state of in-betweenness that characterizes ‘small cinema’ might be well applicable to the pattern of global Thai art cinema in this study – which seems to be small in several modes of practice, but ‘large’ in many others. In his study of the Southeast Asian ‘Indie Revolution,’ Tilman Baumgärtel suggests another term that has a closer meaning - ‘microcinema,’²⁰¹ although his definition of ‘indie’ might be problematized by including studio works by directors like Wisit or Nonzee in order to fit his definition of a new generation of digital filmmakers. The smallness of Thai art cinema is manifested in many ‘in-between’ conditions such as productions (small crews working with large co-production budgets), distribution (from cafés to film festivals) and exhibition (from limited domestic release to prominence in the global niche film sector). By placing Thai art cinema into the paradigm of small cinema, we can see how the horizontal and vertical flows of ‘in-betweenness’ interact and intersect the working processes of these directors. In the prior category, a comparative or cross-cultural approach is used spatially along the transnational line, from the border of one national cinema to the international scope of address. In the vertical line, on the other hand, we will look at how one cinema from the global South can reach the global North. In both approaches, local contexts are integrated. Instead of analyzing each director from either top-down or bottom-up approaches, they will be positioned as the center of interest, and their surrounding contexts and paratexts explored.

In this way, we can see how the Thai film industry has grown from a ‘small nation cinema’,²⁰² being oriented towards local consumption, to a combination of diverse categories of ‘small

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p.xxi.

²⁰¹ Baumgärtel, p.3.

²⁰² Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie, *The Cinema of Small Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

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cinemas',²⁰³ targeting both domestic and international audiences. Thai art cinema can be used flexibly to account for many factors, from geographic interrelations (namely national, regional, and global), temporality (in the course of history and contemporaneity), aesthetics (genre, art, or cross-over), texts, distribution, exhibition and reception.

1.4 Mapping the study

My thesis consists of five chapters that assess how local and global contexts have shaped contemporary Thai art cinema and allowed it to reach the international arena, and how the authorship of each of the featured directors is maintained or modified within those contexts. The three analytical chapters each focus on one director and their encounter with particular contexts, combining accounts of their production circumstances with textual study of their works. Each case study uses different methods related to the modes of transnational production and reception of each director. Theoretical debates will be tackled along the way to see the difference between existing scholarship and real situations.

This Introduction chapter has framed the main arguments, aims, and scope of this study, as well as related theories that underpin the methodology. Chapter Two explores the transnational journey of Pen-ek Ratanaruang and the fluctuations in his collaborative authorship with a team he inherited from his advertising work before the making of his first feature, from a locally oriented mode of practices to pan-Asian co-production and then independent filmmaking. From this, we will see how his collaborative authorship has been interrupted by the process of, as it is called in Thailand, 'going international.'

Chapter Three explores Apichatpong Weerasethakul's interdependence with European co-production structures and such film festivals as the International Film Festival of Rotterdam and the Cannes International Film Festival as he has achieved global success. He is the Thai filmmaker whose works have been mostly criticized in the two extreme responses – 'if you do not love it, you hate it.' In Chapter Four, the case of Anocha Suwichakornpong, who has the least name recognition of the three, focuses on her interrelation with film festival circuits and the way those bodies have attempted to create a reputation for her. This is done by examining the release of her films on home video formats, and how she has been connected to Apichatpong. Together

²⁰³ Falkowska and Giukin, pp. vii-xxiv.

with the contemporary rise of global generation, the Thai independent generation is more identified with what I define as the institutional or intertext-based authorship.

The last chapter synthesizes the findings from the three cases into an overall theoretical argument concerning the changing map of art cinema, that has facilitated into a new national cinema in the last decades, and my observations on the necessity of the construction of authorial identities if filmmakers are to be recognized in this world. This chapter also discusses the relevance of the tripartite cultural experiences (Thai-born, US-educated and enmeshed in a network of mainly European filmmaking resources) of all three filmmakers, and how this relates to the discourses of niche film industries.

Chapter 2 Pen-ek Ratanaruang and the Negotiation of Authorship

I had no education [in film], this is how I learn – film by film, mistake by mistake.

Pen-ek Ratanaruang²⁰⁴

Director Pen-ek Ratanaruang has been recognized as an influential auteur since the emergence of New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s. Wouter Barendrecht, the late head of Fortissimo, one of the first sales agencies to represent Thai films at that time, accorded him an equivalent status to Malaysian arthouse favourite Tsai Ming Liang.²⁰⁵ The Berlin International Film Festival's Forum programmer, Dorothee Wenner, evaluated his directorial contribution to *Fun Bar Karaoke* as 'remarkable pioneering work.'²⁰⁶ Renowned Australian cinematographer Christopher Doyle realized that what he had seen as a particular style of Thai-ness in Pen-ek's early films was actually the director's own particular signature²⁰⁷ (translation mine). With such enthusiastic responses during the initial years of his filmmaking journey, he was considered a 'talented Thai director',²⁰⁸ and 'one of the top auteurs of Thailand's new wave',²⁰⁹ on the basis of just two films.

This achievement was not surprising for those in the advertising world in the late 1990s, as Pen-ek had already been famous as one of an emerging generation of TV commercial directors, winning both local and international awards. He attended high school in the US at a time when American

²⁰⁴ Baumgärtel, p.199.

²⁰⁵ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'Nangthai Yuk Song-ook, Moom Mong Jaak Laak Thin' [Thai Film in Export Era: A Diversity of Perspectives], *Thai Film Quarterly*, 3.10 (2001a), 48-64 (p.50).

²⁰⁶ The phrase was written in German as 'Tom Pannet mit *Fun Bar Karaoke* eine in jeder Hinsicht bemerkenswerte Pionierarbeit geleistet,' but translated into English as 'Tom Pannet has done pioneering work with *Fun Bar Karaoke* in every respect.' Dorothy Wenner, 'Fun Bar Karaoke', in *47 Internationale Filmfestspiele 13-24 February 97* (Berlin: Grafikpress, 1997), title 56. In Thailand, Pen-ek is known by the nickname Tom, and in his early years in the west went by the name Tom Pannet, a rough anglicisation of Tom Pen-ek.

²⁰⁷ Christopher Doyle, 'Jaak Thao La-mok' [From Dirty Old Man], in *Yang Noi Tee Sud Prawat Lae Thassana Nai Wai Mai Num Kong Pen-ek Ratanaruang* [At the least: Not Young Pen-ek Ratanaruang - Bio and Outlook], ed. by Vorapoj Phanpong (Bangkok: Typhoon Books, 2006), no pagination.

²⁰⁸ Lee Marshall, 'Venice Festival Is Classy Toronto Prequel', *Screen International*, 6 September 2003 <<https://www.screendaily.com/venice-festival-is-classy-toronto-prequel/4014932.article>> [accessed 12 February 2021] (para.16 of 31).

²⁰⁹ Staff Reporters, 'Screen International's Latest News from Berlin', *Screen International*, 12 February 2002 <<https://www.screendaily.com/screen-internationals-latest-news-from-berlin/408298.article>> [accessed 4 November 2020] (para.18 of 23).

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Pop Art was at a high point in the wake of noted artists like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, then studied art history at the Pratt Institute in New York, returning home in 1986 after eight formative years in the US. His background at Pratt, and his experience as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer during the 1980s, enabled him to enter the advertising business in Thailand faster and at a higher level than many others, starting with top international agencies Leo Burnett and The Film Factory. At that time, the Thai advertising industry was on the rise, cashing in more than 50 billion baht earnings each year (approximately £1.25 billion),²¹⁰ and advertising directors were sought out by the Thai film industry to try their hands at feature directing.²¹¹ After a successful decade in advertising, Pen-ek turned to directing with his first feature, *Fun Bar Karaoke* – a portrayal of Thai superstition against the backdrop of Bangkok modernity in 1997.

Since 1997, Pen-ek has made nine features, one documentary (*Paradoxocracy, Pra-cha-thi-pa-Thai*, 2013), one television series (*The Life of Gravity, Raeng dueng dood*, 2014), and several shorts, some of which were commissioned by film festivals or broadcasters. All of his features have premiered at top-tier film festivals like Berlin, Cannes, and Venice. *Fun Bar Karaoke* (1997) and *Sixtynin9* (Ruang talok 69, 1999) were selected for the International Forum of Young Film of Berlin, *Monrak Transistor* (2001) for Cannes Director Fortnight, *Last Life in the Universe* (Ruang rak noi nid mahasan, 2003) for the sidebar section Horizons at the Venice International Film, *Invisible Waves* (Kam-pipaksa khong mahasamut, 2006) for the official competition at the Berlin International Film, *Ploy* (2007) for Cannes Director Fortnight; *Nymph* (Nang mai, 2009) for Un Certain Regard at Cannes; *Headshot* (2011) for the Panorama section at Berlin International Film Festival; and *Samui Song* (Mai mee Samui samrab ter, 2017) for the critic section known as Venice Days at the Venice International Film Festival. Unlike Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Anocha Suwichakornpong, however, film festivals functioned for Pen-ek mostly as promotional venues to introduce his new works to the arthouse circle, rather than as distribution or exhibition sources.

In the course of making these nine features, Pen-ek has adopted various strategies to enable him to move from local production to pan-Asian networks and independent European co-production models. His first three features – *Fun Bar Karaoke*, *Sixtynin9*, and *Monrak Transistor* – were financed by local studio Five Star Production. His fourth and fifth works – *Last Live in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves* – were pan-Asian co-productions before he went back to local support for *Ploy*

²¹⁰ Advertising Association of Thailand, 'Ad Industry Milestone', *Advertising Association of Thailand*, [n.d.]. <http://www.adasso thai.com/index.php/main/about/milestone_detail/6> [accessed 24 September 2020].

²¹¹ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, Khwam Samnuekruam Nai Phattanakarn Silpa Lae Karnwijarn Khong Thai 2525-2550: Papphayon, Appendix 2: Nonzee.

and *Nymph*. After the deaths of producer Wouter Barendrecht and Five Star Production's head Charoen lamphungporn, both of whom had long supported him, he decided to work independently in the same way as Apichatpong for his two subsequent works, *Headshot* and *Samui Song*.

In this chapter I will explore the interrelation between these strategies and Pen-ek's changing mode of collaborative authorship. The chapter starts off with an analysis of the construction of collaborative authorship that emerged during the production of the director's works. Here, a production studies approach is employed as a major methodology to discover the roles of Pen-ek and his crew – mostly consisting of advertising people – as well as their collaboration in constructing collaborative authorship. After that, I explore the effect that auteur branding had on his collaborative authorship after he entered the pan-Asian cinema network. In this discussion, the concept of 'regional hierarchies' asserted by Nissim Otmazgin and Eyal Ben-Ari²¹² is used to analyse the asymmetric relationship between co-production and collaboration in East and Southeast Asia. Unlike Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, who focus their study on popular culture in relation to 'region,' I examine Pen-ek's works and production methods, involving mainly the roles of the above-the-line crew, to reveal the strategies used in the production of Asian art cinema. Finally, Pen-ek's authorship is analysed to see how it has been affected by different strategies at each stage of his filmmaking route.

2.1 Advertising apparatus as project-based organization

One of the big changes caused by the emergence of New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s was the professional transformation of the Thai film industry, which had previously operated as a set of family businesses. The general characteristics of film industries have long been understood through the paradigm of what Allen J. Scott defines, with regard to Hollywood, as 'a bipartite or tripartite system.'²¹³ In addition to the two tiers in the bipartite system - the majors and the independents - there is also a third tier comprising independents who are allied with or subsidized by the majors. In this way, the majors can operate either through vertical integration – controlling all parts of the filmmaking process, from financing to distribution and exhibition – or through horizontal

²¹² Nissim Otmazgin and Eyal Ben-Ari, 'Chapter 1 Introduction: History and Theory in the Study of Cultural Collaboration', in *Popular Culture and the State in East and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: NUS Press; Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, 2013), pp.2-25 (p.18) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1nthhp.5?seq=1>> [accessed 29 October 2020].

²¹³ Allen J. Scott, 'A New Map of Hollywood: The Production and Distribution of American Motion Pictures', *Regional Studies*, December, 36.9 (2002), pp.957-975 (pp.963-4) <DOI: 10.1080/0034340022000022215> [17 June 2021].

integration – extending their production activities via other small, specialized firms while the studios themselves stand at the top of the hierarchy as investors. This latter matter might also be known as ‘the vertical disintegration of the organizational structure,’ one of the three characteristics of the ‘flexible specialization’ strategies that have operated in the Hollywood system, alongside product differentiation and a balance of competition and cooperation between multinational corporations and independent companies.²¹⁴ Flexible specialization usually refers to an alternative model of production based on the diversification of production via specialized producers that together are able to rapidly respond to changing market conditions and to adapt to more exigent and volatile consumers.²¹⁵ When Pen-ek started his filmmaking journey in the late 1990s, the Thai film industry was not yet fully developed and still consisted of just a few studios which can be categorized into two types. The first group were those companies which owned the theatres and then bought foreign films or produced domestic movies to be exhibited in their venues. Most of them had been set up before the 1990s and were essentially family businesses, like Five Star Production, Sahamongkol Film, and Tai Entertainment. This group also incorporated the provincial film distributors which owned theatres and practised a similar model of distribution and exhibition in each of the five regions of the country.²¹⁶ The other group consisted of businesses run in a more professional style, as they had begun as offshoots of other entertainment business, especially record companies, exemplified by Grammy Film and RS Film. They operated in a paradigm of vertical integration – controlling the entire filmmaking process, from financing to production, distribution and exhibition, and usually developing their own projects and choosing to work regularly with particular directors. Only occasionally was there a third type – the absolute independents which sought funds by themselves or acquired them from investors in other business.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Chris Lukinbeal, ‘The Rise of Regional Film Production Centres in North America, 1984-1997’, *GeoJournal*, 59.204 (2004), 307-321 (pp.307, 320) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41147855?seq=1>> [accessed 18 May 2022].

²¹⁵ IGI Global Publisher of Timely Knowledge, ‘What is Flexible Specialization’, *IGI Global Publisher of Timely Knowledge*, [n.d.] <<https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/flexible-specialization/11255>> [accessed 26 December 2022] (para.1 of 2).

²¹⁶ Before the popularity of multiplexes caught on around 1994, film distribution in Thailand had been divided into two systems – shared and all-rights distribution. In the former, the revenue was shared equally between the movie’s rights owner and theatre operators, but only in Bangkok and a few other major cities. Beyond that, the whole rights were sold to five provincial distributors who usually owned second-run theatres in their territories. The five regions covered by these provincial distributors were Bangkok’s outskirts, the north, the north-east, the east, and the south. In addition, there was the third type of rights that belonged to outdoor screening operators, who might acquire them either directly from the producers or from the provincial distributors.

²¹⁷ It was rumoured that some investors were those who operated gold shops.

Five Star Production, one of the oldest studios in Thailand, founded in 1973, fell into the first group, functioning as, in Douglas Gomery's terms, 'producers who greenlighted projects'²¹⁸ at a studio and then had the ownership of film rights. They would assign their line producers simply to monitor the production costs, and the directors – normally working under their own production companies – otherwise retained full creative freedom. This system is now remembered as an important factor that drove the first Thai New Wave in the 1970s. Within this kind of system in the 1990s, Pen-ek could maintain his independence and pursue relatively non-mainstream film styles and themes, whereas other advertising directors who approached emerging film studios like Tai Entertainment or record company affiliates faced more pressure to balance commercial requirements with artistry. By western standards, Pen-ek's works would be considered independent.²¹⁹ But from a local perspective, they were studio works.

No matter which approach was used, each production was undertaken in the form of a project-based organization (PBO), the key characteristic of film production in a 'horizontally integrated transactions-intensive industry,' in which each production might involve several small companies,²²⁰ or in the case of Thailand freelancers such as editors, cinematographers and etc. A PBO is a form of temporary organization consisting of various skilled members who come to work together for a limited period to produce products or services, with the project itself as the 'coordinating mechanism.'²²¹ It usually comprises three interlinking tools for the organization of labour – the network, the project, and the department.²²² Normally, each film represents 'the project', operating like an organisation whose teamwork is diversified into several smaller departments (art department, lighting department, etc) according to each particular skill, supervised by heads of departments. The network consists of the film practitioners who come together according to their specialisms and relationships. The structures of the project and the

²¹⁸ Douglas Gomery, 'The New Hollywood, 1981-1999', in *Producing*, ed. by Jon Lewis (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), pp.111-130 (p.111) <<https://www-jstor-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/stable/j.ctt194xgx5> [accessed 19 November 2021].

²¹⁹ Wenner, title 56.

²²⁰ Michael Hoyler and Allan Watson, 'Framing City Networks through Temporary Projects: (Trans)national Film Production Beyond 'Global Hollywood'', *Urban Studies*, 56.5 (2019), 943-959 (p.945-6). <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098018790735>> [16 June 2021].

²²¹ Stefano Brusconi, Andrea Prencipe, and Amman Salter, 'CoPS Complex Product Systems Innovation Centre', *Working Paper*, 46 (CoPS Publication, 1998), cited in John A. Davenport, 'Project-based Firms in the UK Film Industry: Causes and Consequences' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 2004), p.24.

²²² Sarah Atkinson, *From Film Practice to Data Process: Production Aesthetics and Representational Practices of a Film Industry in Transition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), pp.21-22 <<https://www-jstor-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1tqxv49>> [accessed 4 December 2020].

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department remain the same; only the networks vary depending on the working practices of each film project. The hiring is usually based on freelancing, contracting, and outsourcing, with people selected based on previous connections, industrial networks, or reputation.²²³

In Pen-ek's production apparatus, most of the key staff have come from the advertising world, beginning with *Fun Bar Karaoke*, for which he had a very tight budget of 6 million baht (£125,000) – half the amount he requested from the studio.²²⁴ In that case, he chose to work with the team he had been familiar with throughout his career so far. The studio gave him the opportunity to direct a film in part because of the team he could bring with him from advertising. Charoen lamphungporn, the studio head, remarked that 'This production team has had some interesting experience in advertising – one of the fastest growing sectors in the market today.'²²⁵ Pen-ek also recognised that advertising directors were in demand in the film industry during these times: 'Before I made my directorial debut, young generations had hardly entered the film industry. The advertising circle was much more professional. But the film industry is more developed today' (translation mine).²²⁶ As a result, most of his department heads remain the same people that he hired for his first film. In his first three films, only a few individuals came from the film industry: executive producer Charoen lamphuengporn, project consultant Kobsuk Sukjinda, sound recordist Nipat Sumneangsator, and first assistant director Chartchai Laoyont. The rest were from the advertising field. A daughter of 1970s veteran director Prince Chatreechalerm Yukol, Patamanadda Yukol, also had some experience editing her father's features, but she now worked full-time in TV commercials. Sound designer Amornbhong Methakunvudh was known as a pioneer in the advertising field before going on to work on some of the most renowned Thai feature films of the early 2000s.²²⁷ In addition, during Pen-ek's first years of film production, many facilities were provided by his boss at the Film Factory advertising agency, Pongpaiboon Sitthikoo.

This 'advertising-production apparatus' operates like an informal unit, in which the advertising industry acts like a studio and Pen-ek's feature filmmaking is treated like one of its projects. His

²²³ Lorraine Rowlands and Jocelyn Handy, 'An Addictive Environment: New Zealand Film Production Workers' Subjective Experiences of Project-based Labour', *Human Relations*, 65.5 (2012), 657-680 (p.659). <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726711431494>> [accessed 9 August 2020].

²²⁴ Vorapoj Phanpong, Yang Noi Tee Sud Prawat Lae Thassana Nai Wai Mai Num Kong Pen-ek Ratanaruang (see above at n.207), p.98.

²²⁵ The Focus Desk, 'From Dreams into Madness', *Nation*, 13 September 1996, Section C, pp. C1-C2.

²²⁶ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.73.

²²⁷ Wild at Heart, 'The Team', *Wild at Heart*, [n.d.] <<http://www.wildatheart.co.th/main/the-team/>> [accessed: 24 September 2020].

crew always had opportunities to use commercials to train themselves in the expertise needed for a feature film project. In contrast to subsequent arthouse directors like Apichatpong and Anocha, who graduated from film schools, their filmmaking education was entirely practical and on-the-job, as had typically been the case for previous generations of Thai filmmakers.

In this apparatus, there is interplay and interaction between human and social capital. In Bourdieu's definition, social capital is 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group.'²²⁸ According to Robert J DeFillippi and Michael B Arthur,²²⁹ in the case of film, 'human capital' refers to filmmaking-related experience and knowledge, and 'social capital' means working relationship among the crew. A producer or a director chooses their crew from their experiences and networks, investing in their human capital and social capital. Heads of departments also use the same methods in choosing the members of their teams.

In Pen-ek's filmmaking apparatus, social capital has been accumulated through the construction over time of his 'semi-permanent work group' (SPWG) in the advertising field. Referring to individuals who work together on a repeated basis, an SPWG secures 'employment discretely using personal contacts, or as part of a work unit.'²³⁰ Although scholars have raised a number of concerns related to labour injustice, such as repeat collaboration, skill development and worker welfare,²³¹ the positive sides of SPWGs include reducing the risk of unsuccessful work relationships²³² and their

²²⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Form of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by John G. Richardson (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp.241-258 (p.248).

²²⁹ Robert J DeFillippi and Michael B Arthur, 'Paradox in Project-based Enterprise: The Case of Filmmaking', *California Management Review*, 40.2 (1998), 125-139 (p.134-135) <<https://doi.org/10.2307%2F41165936>> [14 June 2021].

²³⁰ Helen Blair, 'You're Only as Good as Your Last Job': the Labour Process and Labour Market in the British Film Industry', *Work, Employment & Society*, 15.1 (March 2001), 149-169 (p.154) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23747789>> [accessed 11 September 2020].

²³¹ See details. Helen Blair, Susan Grey and Keith Randle, 'Working in Film: Employment in a Project Based Industry', *Personnel Review*, 30.2 (2001), 170-185; Erza W. Zuckerman, 'Do Firms and Markets Look Different? Repeat Collaboration in the Feature Film Industry, 1935-1995', *Working Paper* (MIT Sloan School of Management, 2004); John A. Davenport, 'Project-based Firms in the UK Film Industry: Causes and Consequences' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 2004); Lorraine Rowlands and Jocelyn Handy, 'An Addictive Environment: New Zealand Film Production Workers' Subjective Experiences of Project-based Labour', *Human Relations*, 65.5 (2012), 657-680; and Sarah Atkinson, *From Film Practice to Data Process: Production Aesthetics and Representational Practices of a Film Industry in Transition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).

²³² Helen Blair, p.165.

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ability to serve as 'storage units' for industry-wide norms and rules.²³³ Repeat collaboration causes the hiring of the same persons by each director and less opportunities are given to newcomers. With project-based hiring, it is difficult for the staff to get any training to develop their skills. In the same way, no welfare is also provided for them if they work on freelance basis. Maria Daskalaki and Helen Blair broaden the idea:

SPWGs are important sets of social relations within which knowledge is both held and shared. Industry norms, culture and rules are modified and re-enacted within the groups, as are the relations between teams, as a result of socialization within a given SPWG. Furthermore, the ways of working and behaving of that particular SPWG are also shaped, reshaped and shared within the group context.²³⁴

Pen-ek's semi-permanent work group primarily comprises the heads of departments, including cinematographer Chankit Chamniwikraipong, production designer Pawas Sawatchaiyamet,²³⁵ costume designer Visa Kongka, casting director Sukumaporn Suthisrisinlpa, editor Patamanadda Yukol and first assistant director Cherdpong Laoyont. They are all recognised as top-level crew in both filmmaking and advertising in Thailand and the wider region. Some of them have held dual responsibilities, such as cinematographer Charnkit, who has overseen both the camera and electric departments, while production designer Pawas has sometimes been in charge of location management and line producing. Chankit even had waived his fee in making Pen-ek's third feature *Monrak Transistor*.²³⁶ He had no previous filmmaking experience when he decided to collaborate with Pen-ek on *Fun Bar Karaoke*: "I only have to support the director. If he was not my friend, I would not do it. We had worked together and shared the same experiences for a long time"²³⁷(translation mine). Younger first assistant director Cherdpong Laoyont also elucidated the director's sharedness of team works in their collaboration. "He gave me a lot of opportunities. I have learnt the calmness, problem-solving, compromises, and energy that they belong. If I have the rights to choose, I prefer to work with this group of filmmakers."²³⁸

²³³ Maria Daskalaki and Helen Blair, 'Knowing as an Activity: Implications for the Film Industry and Semi-permanent Work Groups', in *Organizations as Knowledge Systems: Knowledge, Learning and Dynamic Capabilities*, ed. by Haridimos Tsoukas and Nikolaos Mylonopoulos (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.181-205 (p.182) <DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-60477-6_5> [accessed 10 November 2020].

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.193.

²³⁵ His former name was Saksiri Chantarangsi.

²³⁶ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.96.

²³⁷ Thanakrit Teokul, *Nang Tuayang* [The Trailer] (Bangkok: Inspire, 2007).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.179.

These working interactions between the team and the director can be seen in terms of what Rowlands and Handy²³⁹ identify as ‘a set of social relationships’ that ‘an addicted person’ builds around his addictive object or activity. In their paper, the addicted person refers to freelance film production workers in New Zealand, and the addictive object or activity means the working process among them. This set of social relationships can deteriorate if the core addictive object is removed. However, in Pen-ek’s case, the addict (the freelancer) does not see their expected return in terms of financial benefit, as the payment for working on Pen-ek’s films is not high compared to salaries in the advertising industry. But they were distributed proportionally. Everyone at the same level is paid the same.²⁴⁰ Securing future employment is not the crew’s main purpose in working with Pen-ek. There might be some advantages, like gaining experience or reputation in working with the director, but it is Pen-ek’s manner and friendship that underpin their collaboration, which has developed through their project-based organization. As Rowlands and Handy put it, social relationships between workers help to maintain and reinforce industry norms and working practices even when these are deleterious to the economic well-being of the workforce.²⁴¹

Pen-ek has acknowledged this kind of collaboration frequently. In one of his interviews after his first pan-Asian production, *Last Life in the Universe*, he emphasised the importance of trust in his collaboration with the above-the-line crew:

Filmmaking requires a number of workers. I need only a few people who share the same ideas and taste to oversee the work of each department, to be the head of departments. I have always hired the same group of people. Sometimes they did not follow what I told them, but developed it. If I have to make a movie overseas, I will still take this group with me. It is too difficult to make a movie alone²⁴² (translation mine).

The director’s attitudes are the key factors in constructing this network. For him, the director is the creator of the main concept and the controller of the film’s direction, but other ideas can be proposed by anyone in the teamwork.²⁴³ Working with the best crew in the country, he can leave many of the major tasks to them, without much intervention. In 2001, during my visit to the set of

²³⁹ Rowlands and Handy, p.669.

²⁴⁰ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.92.

²⁴¹ Rowlands and Handy, p.660.

²⁴² Vorapoj Phanpong, pp.142.

²⁴³ Amitha Amaranant, ‘Creative Space Workshop: Fon Tok Khuen Fah (*Headshot*) by Pen-ek Ratanaruang’, *Thailand Creative and Design Centre*, 13 February 2012 <<https://www.tcdc.or.th/th/all/service/resource-center/article/16542-Creative-Space-Workshop>> [accessed 6 July 2020] (para.5 of 8)

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Monrak Transistor, the director looked at the monitor to check the image only once, while concentrating on directing the actors. Pen-ek recounted, 'My cinematographer has been working with me for ten years. I have complete trust in him. We talk a lot before the shoot to make sure we understand each other as much as possible'.²⁴⁴ During the shooting of his sixth movie, *Ploy* (2007), he paid little attention to the crew. Instead, hiding himself in one of the corners of the set, he focused on the sound recording²⁴⁵ and let the other collaborators do the jobs on their own. Production designer Pawas once even complained about the director's willingness to compromise: 'Meeting this kind of person, I will leave all my trust to him because he considers my films as his own works'²⁴⁶ (translation mine).

In fact, this 'network of relationships' is also aware of the importance by Bourdieu and enables the director to sustain his collaborative authorship. According to Bourdieu, the network of relationships

is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighbourhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights).²⁴⁷

It might be argued that Candace Jones's notion of 'team interdependence' is crucial here since it requires a 'high level of mutual responsibility that each individual joins in building up a product or service.'²⁴⁸ In Pen-ek's apparatus, this 'team interdependence' is manifested through the cross-communication between each department. Each crew member has to pay attention not only to their own job but also to each other's responsibilities.²⁴⁹ Before the start of shooting, all the above-the-line crew members would meet one another and have opportunities to understand the roles of others in what is called the script-reading day. According to the lead actress Siriyakorn Pukkavesa,

²⁴⁴ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'On Location: Pen-ek Ratanaruang *Monrak Transistor*', *CineMaya the Asian Film Quarterly*, 53 (Autumn 2001b), 11-13 (p.13).

²⁴⁵ Pen-ek Ratanarueng, 'Making Of', *Ploy*, dir. by Pen-ek Ratanaruang (Nonthaburi: Premium Digital Entertainment, 2008) [on DVD].

²⁴⁶ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.140.

²⁴⁷ Bourdieu, 'The Form of Capital,' pp.249-250.

²⁴⁸ Candace Jones, 'Careers in Project Networks: The Case of the Film Industry', in *The Boundaryless Career: A New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*, ed. by Michael Bernard Arthur, and Denise M. Rousseau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.58-75 (p.60).

²⁴⁹ Amitha Amaranant, para.5 of 8.

DOP Chankit understood her role much better after the workshop.²⁵⁰ Pen-ek also rejects the use of acting coaches, instead directly communicating with the actors himself.²⁵¹

As a result, there have been minimal changes among the above-the-line crew, except the producers. Most of them have worked with Pen-ek for more than a decade – long enough for the accumulation of social capital, which was a valuable asset when the director moved to work firstly on feature projects and later on pan-Asian and independent filmmaking models. Asano Tadanobu, the lead Japanese actor in *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*, remarked, ‘It’s not like working in Japan. Thai crew is like friends of mine [sic].’²⁵² Even the global cinematographer Christopher Doyle recognized this special kinship as ‘love,’ as he put it: ‘The collaboration is so intense. It’s not film-making: it’s love. And I’m going to give up a lot of other films to do this one, which is a Thai film with no budget, but a small group of people who really love each other.’²⁵³

This kind of collaboration is akin to the way numerous theorists have described an ensemble jazz performance. Jean-Pierre Geuens notes in this process of ‘deeply felt kinship of committed individuals,’²⁵⁴ everyone attunes his part to match what the rest of the ensemble is doing, sharing a common goal with the others. Each player utilises his instrument creatively while responding to the other musicians instinctually and passionately. Barry Gaut suggests this similarity in terms of multiple-authorship where we ‘look at films the same way as we do jazz: as a product of many individuals, whose work is inflected in a complex manner by their interactions with their colleagues.’²⁵⁵ John T Caldwell also embraces the idea that the crew work together as an ‘ensemble,’ which frequently collapses a number of traditional on-set distinctions.²⁵⁶

This kind of social relationships, I argue, is a key to success for many new filmmakers, also exemplified in the case of Apichatpong (see Chapter 3). Each director has their own way of team

²⁵⁰ Thanakrit Teokul, p.195.

²⁵¹ Amitha Amaranant, para.6 of 8.

²⁵² Asano Tadanobu, ‘Scoop,’ *Last Life in the Universe DVD*, dir. by Pen-ek Ratanarueng (Bangkok: Mangpong, 2003) [on DVD].

²⁵³ SF Said, ‘The Eyes Have It’, *Vertigo*, 2.8 (Spring-Summer 2005).

<https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-2-issue-8-spring-summer-2005/the-eyes-have-it/> [accessed 20 September 2020] (para.13 of 52).

²⁵⁴ Jean-Pierre Geuens, ‘The Space of Production,’ *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 24:5, 411-420 (p.419) <DOI: 10.1080/10509200500536264> [12 July 2020].

²⁵⁵ Berys Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p.132 <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511674716.005> [accessed 10 March 2021].

²⁵⁶ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, p.229.

management to achieve their goals. In Pen-ek's case, the construction of 'intimacy' or 'bonding' are his key to managing the consistency of production, which he has gained by treating his crew as his family. As he puts it, 'My crew is someone I choose myself. We know each other and work together like my family.'²⁵⁷ Arguably, this is the aesthetics of Pen-ek's production – the term that I apply from Sarah Atkinson's 'aesthetics of production,' referring to 'a set of practices, behaviours and attendant manifestations of practitioners in production communities.'²⁵⁸ The identification of these on the other hand leads to the construction of a specific 'production aesthetics,' which becomes a characteristic of that film production. While my personal experience of Pen-ek's working methods is limited by the small number of visits I have made to his sets to see his production process in action (he did not direct many films during my research period), the aesthetics of production that I would like to analyse here are based on the visit to his set in 2001, documents, and behind-the-scenes DVD features. From these resources, it can be argued that Pen-ek's production aesthetics are grounded in the reciprocity among the above-the-line crew members in the advertising team, where intimacy and bonding are used to help interact and communicate with one another. This intimacy and bonding underpin the mutual support given to one another in the name of trust, compromise, flexibility, and respect, which allow understanding and collaboration to develop. With all these collaborations, it is more appropriate to examine Pen-ek's work within the paradigm of collaborative rather than single authorship, especially since he had to change his working practices during the move to the pan-Asian mode of production when making *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*.

2.2 Defining Pen-ek's collaborative authorship

In the last two decades, the notion of collaborative authorship has been much discussed in academic debates, especially in association with production discourse. Looking at the development of the field, it can be argued that one of the earliest proponents of the notion of collaborative authorship was Robert Carringer in his 1985 book *The Making of "Citizen Kane,"* in which he categorized different levels of workers involved in the production of the movie.²⁵⁹ A decade later, Berys Gaut suggested the concept of multiple authorship in analysing the types of creativity and collaboration surrounding a film, proposing two dimensions of study: the degree and nature of

²⁵⁷ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.19.

²⁵⁸ Sarah Atkinson, p.2.

²⁵⁹ Robert Carringer, *The Making of Citizen Kane* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), cited in Janet Staiger, 'Authorship Approaches', in *Authorship and Film* (see above at n.48), pp.27-57 (p.41).

creative power that affects a film's artistic properties, and the agreement between collaborators in a film's production process. Although Gaut's examples focus mainly on the role of actors in a film, he concludes that 'films should be multiply classified',²⁶⁰ rather than given a single authority. At the dawn of the 21st century, Carringer returned to the debate, interrogating the assumption that director Alfred Hitchcock was a primary author in the making of *Strangers on a Train* (1951).²⁶¹ Around the same time, Janet Staiger also elaborated upon the concept of collaborative authorship's homosexual subtexts – as she puts it, the 'authorship-within-a-sociology-of-production'²⁶² – in her categorization of authorial approaches. Framed by Staiger in terms of *structural-functional* and *critical* approaches (emphasis original), where liberal and Marxist notions of sociology are taken as the ground theories for analysis, the author is studied as a single person working to serve institutions involved in different modes of production. Nevertheless, in her opinion, the author in this discourse is still considered a subject.

In general, the terms 'collaborative,' 'multiple,' and 'collective' authorship are used interchangeably. Carringer tries to distinguish each term by dividing the process of collaboration into two phases. The first suspends the state of single authority for a while and then estimates the properties that each collaborator has contributed to 'a text's authorship.'²⁶³ In the second stage, the primary author is rewritten in a discourse which is constructed as an 'institutional context of authorship.'²⁶⁴ Despite working under the institutional discourse with many collaborators, a director still maintains their status as primary author. This is different from the multiple-authorship studies and collective-authorship studies, which emphasise structures of shared agency. Paisley Livingston, despite his acknowledgement of the Romantic idea on the author's intentional agency, proposes the theory of multiple authorship as something that must be considered when analysing the process of filmmaking.²⁶⁵ By analysing the relationships in the production process, he typifies the characteristics of collaboration into four types of individual and joint authorship. These relationships are explored in duality between 'intentional agency'²⁶⁶ and the value of the work,

²⁶⁰ Berys Gaut, 'Film Authorship and Collaboration', in *Film Theory and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.149-172 (p.164). ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁶¹ Robert L. Carringer, 'Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship,' *PMLA*, 116.2 (March 2001), 370-379 (pp.374-7) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/463523>> [accessed 28 April 2020].

²⁶² Staiger, p.40.

²⁶³ Carringer, *Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship*, p.377.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Paisley Livingston, 'Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy', in *Oxford Scholarship Online*, p.65 <DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199570171.001.0001> [accessed 28 February 2021].

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

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between the authorship and the unity of the works, and between the 'form of decision-making'²⁶⁷ and expressive or artistic design. The first two categories are related to the notion of individual authorship, in which the first one referring to a 'sole-maker' who does everything on his own,²⁶⁸ and the other to an individual author who works in an environment with many collaborators. The last category is divided into two types under the same title of 'joint authorship amongst equals' – two or more people working on an equal basis, and two or more contributors supervising other contributions.

Livingston's intentionalist author rhetoric is also taken up by Paul Sellors as a ground concept in theorizing collective authorship. Instead of capturing the idea of intentional author agency alone, Sellors traces the concept back to an earlier essay by Livingston,²⁶⁹ where Livingston suggests the attachment of intention and action with the author in characterizing the authorship. Sellors insists that intention must have a purpose and be operated through action. In other words, the author has an intention to do something, and then puts it into action, validating the intended meaning in the text. As we are 'social beings'²⁷⁰ who interact and communicate with other humans in a society, filmmaking also requires us to act collectively, and thus authorship should be understood collectively through 'theories of collective intentional action.'²⁷¹ In this way, there is always a diversity of 'joint authorship' in any collaborative expression. A work of art is commonly evaluated in terms of a true auteur's intention, deliberation, and control of the creative process, rather than their accidental output – an overgeneralization in my opinion. Many contributors might be assigned to develop a project by their studio bosses, and the intentions of each may be identifiable in the finished work. Sellors also argues that to evaluate control is problematic since 'intentions already imply control.' In my opinion, the concepts should be separated. A director's intention can also be expressed by giving freedom to his crew, in the way Pen-ek does.

Berys Gaut,²⁷² on the other hand, sees control as the main requirement in manifesting the authority of authorship. He identifies three strategies used by critics to assert that a cinematic work is that of

²⁶⁷ V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p.184, cited in Livingston, *Oxford Scholarship Online*, p.69.

²⁶⁸ Livingston, *Cinema, Philosophy Bergman*, p.72.

²⁶⁹ Paisley Livingston, 'Cinematic Authorship', in *Film Theory and Philosophy*, ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.132-148. ProQuest Ebook Central.

²⁷⁰ Paul C. Sellors, 'Collective Authorship in Film', *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism*, 65.3 (2007), 263-271 (p.269).

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, pp.108-118.

a single author – the restriction strategy, the sufficient control strategy, and construction strategy. In the first and second strategies, the author is still considered a subject who maintains the power to control the film's essence. In the first strategy, the author, usually the director, is said to control the artistic properties of a film and leave the non-artistic parts – which supposedly do not count towards its authorship – to his collaborators. In the sufficient control strategy, the author demonstrates personal creativity but also uses other people's creative talents to construct the work. The contributions of others, however, only extend as far as the director allows them to. The third strategy is closer to a mode of multiple authorship than the first two. According to this point of view, the author of a work is a critical construct, and in a collaborative endeavour such as filmmaking this putative authorial persona could comprise the 'authorial acts' of more than one individual.

John T. Caldwell also acknowledges control as being central to his definition of authorship, especially in the case of a project run by a large studio or a network. For him, this 'controller-as-author status'²⁷³ is to be examined in terms of the institutional logic of production authorship and forms of 'collectivity',²⁷⁴ involving both the pleasure of interaction and the competence of staff. In general, the authorship will be manifested either from the collectivity of workers or the individual with the highest status or rank in the production company/network.

Pen-ek's collaborative authorship in the advertising apparatus aligns with both Gaut's sufficient control strategy, and also has characteristics of Sarah Atkinson's theory of the working system of production communities in the form of action that needs to be transcended by multi-agents. For Atkinson, collaborative authorship is 'an activity, a process, and an understanding and reflexivity on the part of the Director to enrich and augment their vision and craft.'²⁷⁵ She argues that multiple auteur signatures can be identified in a final text, resulting from the operation of collaborative endeavour during the process. Atkinson calls this kind of collaborative practice 'craft-based production',²⁷⁶ which might be illustrated as an orbicular diagram, as opposed to the more common hierarchical organizational flowchart that is often used to represent a production system. This so-called 'Creative Core Structure of Production Model'²⁷⁷ applies more to productions that

²⁷³ Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity*, p.199.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.228.

²⁷⁵ Atkinson, p.51.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.60.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.79-82.

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are controlled by an author, in which all of the crew would be able to exert different levels of 'production agency' by their interactions in the production process. Starting with the most creative core (consisting of the director, writer, assistant director, and actors) at the centre of the system, the power of creative influence emanates outward to the groups whose creativity might be considered less central, for example design and technical departments or logistical roles such as location management, schedule management and financial administration. Each stakeholder interacts differently according to the working practices in each production department. By doing so, the close working relationships between the collaborators and the social relationships among them are manifest.

By using his advertising team, Pen-ek gained full collaboration as he did not need to negotiate with many other stakeholders. In that situation, creativity emitted outwardly from him to the heads of departments, and less directly to the farthest circle – the logistics and financial structures. He puts into action his personal ideas, but also utilizes other talents. He chooses those above-the-line co-workers who come from similar backgrounds and have similar tastes. They have already sketched the outlines while making their commercials, one might say, and then return to paint the picture in their feature film work. In my opinion, collaborative authorship emerges because of the cooperation that already took place during their previous working experience in advertising. They have developed projects together over many years – from pre-production workshops to production periods, and from one project to another. However, every project proceeded according to blueprints that the director constructed, and so the director may still be considered the primary author in as much as he exercises control over the input of his above-the-line crew.

In the contemporary world of film and television, 'negotiated and collective authorship seems to be an unavoidable task,'²⁷⁸ no matter of what kinds of movies are made. Compared to genre directors, global art house auteurs might have fewer problems in dealing with their producers or investors, but they still have to meet different kinds of compromises, as in the case of Pen-ek's pan-Asian projects. The flows of influence were not solely from him to the crew, but were interrupted by many discursive elements, such as the auteur branding strategy of Wouter Barendrecht, head of Fortissimo Film Sales, and cinematographer Christopher Doyle's pan-Asian aesthetics. *Sight and Sound's* critic Roger Clarke sees 'a radical change of direction' in Pen-ek's fourth feature *Last Life in*

²⁷⁸ Caldwell, *Production Culture*, p.199.

the Universe,²⁷⁹ and his fellow critic Ryan Gilbey provocatively suggests that in that film 'Ratanaruang appears throughout to be wrestling for control with Christopher Doyle.'²⁸⁰ In the same tone, the *New York Times* film critic Mike Hale finds in the film 'a greater languor and deadpan fatalism – east of Jim Jarmusch, west of Wong Kar-Wai.'²⁸¹ Also in the *New York Times*, Stephen Holden similarly perceives a connection between Wong Kar-Wai and Pen-ek, observing that the film 'recalls the muted, dreamy look of Wong Kar-Wai's "In the Mood for Love," in which Mr. Doyle's photography evoked a similar sense of dreamy, opiated suspension somewhere out of time.'²⁸² *Screen International* critic Lee Marshall echoes a similar view in his critique of *Life in the Universe*, citing Doyle's collaboration.²⁸³

The notion of pan-Asian aesthetics in contemporary cinema has been discussed by several scholars. Margaret Hillenbrand notes an intentional use of colour in several Chinese-language films that were made during the first decade of 21st century, including Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Millenium Mambo* (2001), Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002), and numerous films where Christopher Doyle and Taiwanese Ping Bin Lee were cinematographers. Avoiding elevating the subtle use of colour to a 'style' or 'aesthetic', she prefers to define it as an 'approach,' equivalent to a mood, and denoting a 'pan-sensory' mode of reference.²⁸⁴ In Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000), colour conveys love because when love reaches the ultimate state of 'sensoriness',²⁸⁵ love is just like colour. In Doyle's opinion, this cinematic enrichment belongs to Asian culture: 'Like most Asian things, one 'finds' the colours of a film just as one 'finds' the film itself: more or less organically, by focusing on possibilities, and 'rolling with the punches' of unexpected upsets in weather and temperaments and cash flow'.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁹ Roger Clarke, 'Hanging out', *Sight and Sound*, 14.8 (August 2004a), Proquest document link [accessed 8 September 2020] (para.1 of 8).

²⁸⁰ Ryan Gilbey, 'Last Life in the Universe', *Sight and Sound*, 14.8 (August 2004), pp.56-77, 3. Proquest document link [accessed 8 September 2020] (para.8 of 8).

²⁸¹ Mike Hale, 'Film: This Week; A Pair of Nonidentical Twins', *New York Times*, 1 August 2004 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/01/movies/film-this-week-a-pair-of-nonidentical-twins.html>> [accessed 22 May 2022] (para. 3 of 5).

²⁸² Stephen Holden, 'Film Review; Asians with Nothing to Lose in Translation', *The New York Times*, 6 August 2004 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/06/movies/film-review-asians-with-nothing-to-lose-in-translation.html>> [accessed 22 May 2022] (para.9 of 9).

²⁸³ Lee Marshall, 'Last Life in the Universe', *Screen International*, 4 September 2003 <<https://www.screendaily.com/last-life-in-the-universe/4014858.article>> [accessed 22 May 2022] (para.2 of 5)

²⁸⁴ Margaret Hillenbrand, 'Hero, Kurosawa and a Cinema of the Senses', *Screen*, 54: 2 (2013), 127-151, p.150.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Fortissimo Film Sales, *Invisible Waves* (English Press Kit), ([n.p.], 2006), p.12.

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In *Last Life in the Universe*, colour introduces the backgrounds of characters - red for the yakuza, grey for Kenji and green for Noi²⁸⁷ - but it was filmed day-for-night and processed using a special technique so that the image would look enigmatic and abstract.²⁸⁸ In *Invisible Waves* – which is also cited by Hillenbrand in her essay – colours are identified with locations and the guilt felt by the protagonist, for example red for Macau and green for the boat.²⁸⁹ Pen-ek declared, “[in Thailand]

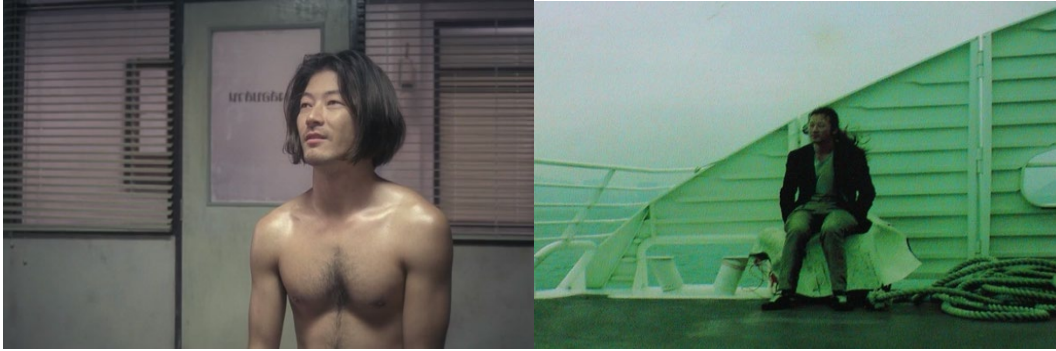


Figure 2. 1 *Last Life in the Universe* (left) and *Invisible Waves* (right)

the temperature makes the colours different. We ended up with a colour scheme.”²⁹⁰ As a result, the use of colour was not coincidental but deliberately planned in order to maintain such aesthetics. In fact, the delivering of ‘sensoriness,’ was determined throughout the making of both films, and read by one critic as a radical change not only in the work of the director, but also in the representation of Thailand as a whole.²⁹¹ The plot-driven narratives that appeared in Pen-ek’s first three features prior to the pan-Asian co-productions were deliberately omitted so that the films could focus on atmosphere and stylized colour. Since the shooting of *Monrak Transistor* in 2001, the director started to question his previous filmmaking style, and became more interested in ‘the overall feeling of the characters.’²⁹² In an interview with the British critic Tony Rayn, he accepted that he tends to ‘find the film while he’s ‘making it.’²⁹³ That film was driven by a recognisable plot and relied on the actors’ emotional delivery in some scenes. The emphasis on ‘feeling’ was more

²⁸⁷ Roger Clarke, 'The Thai Luck Club', *Sight and Sound*, 14.8 (August 2004b), 17-18, 3. Proquest document link [accessed 8 September 2020] (para.14 of 27).

²⁸⁸ Christopher Doyle, 'Scoop,' *Last Life in the Universe DVD*, dir. by Pen-ek Ratanarueng (Bangkok: Mangpong, 2003) [on DVD].

²⁸⁹ Fortissimo Film Sales, *Invisible Waves*, p.12

²⁹⁰ Clarke, The Thai Luck Club, para.14 of 24.

²⁹¹ Clarke, Hanging out, para.1 of 8.

²⁹² Anchalee Chaiworaporn, On Location: Pen-ek Ratanaruang *Monrak Transistor*, p. 13.

²⁹³ Tony Rayns, 'Living in a stylized world: from an interview with Pen-ek Ratanaruang, *Mon-rak Transistor* (English Press Kit), ([n.p.]: Fortissimo Film Sales, 2002), no pagination.

evident in *Last Life in the Universe*, and during the making of *Invisible Waves* in 2006, he also insisted on ‘an immediate response to what is in front of you, instead of following the images that you created in your head.’²⁹⁴ Such instinctive responses would be enforced during both the shoot and the post-production process. This statement was also reasserted again several years later, as he postulated ‘to me, to make a film worth watching is to be honest about your own feelings.’²⁹⁵

Some critics have seen such an attitude as another example of Wong Kar-wai’s influence, as Wong has long been known to favour location-based improvisation.²⁹⁶ The method is recognized as one of the best ways of purifying cinema, instead of controlling production through the use of the script as a blueprint. Other world cinema directors also use this method, including Jean-Luc Godard, as testified by Isabelle Huppert.²⁹⁷ Improvisation is also a part of Doyle’s working process, as Pen-ek explained: ‘The way Chris works is not like a cinematographer, he’s more like a journeyman, an artist who comes to a place and responds. And his footage suggests the way to edit.’²⁹⁸ Geuens’ notion of collaboration, in which filmmaking can be compared to jazz music performances, also applies to the production practice of Wong Kar-wai and Doyle, who terms it *chi* – ‘the notion for one’s natural life energy.’²⁹⁹ Doyle often mentions the resemblance between filmmaking with Wong and music, saying that ‘rhythm is basic to the work, and repetition. There’s a musicality to the image, it’s always a dance, and it’s always abstract, because there’s never a script.’³⁰⁰ It can be suggested that Pen-ek also tried to tune in to this rhythm, working with Doyle in the first of his pan-Asian co-productions. But they needed time to bond and develop their working relationship. He accepted some of the difficulties of collaborating with new people, but, as he put it, ‘I hardly directed. I just watched when the camera was rolling.’³⁰¹ But when he made the second pan-Asian movie *Invisible Waves*, he accepted the situation was better. ‘As time went by when we [Asano and the director] knew each other, it was getting more flexible.’³⁰² The same was true of working with Doyle until they found a ‘rhythm’: ‘I can say ‘Chris, please take the camera down, that shot is so

²⁹⁴ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.140.

²⁹⁵ Baumgärtel, p.198..

²⁹⁶ Geuens, p.413.

²⁹⁷ Said, para. 13 of 52.

²⁹⁸ Clarke, 'The Thai Luck Club', para.12 of 27.

²⁹⁹ Geuens, p.419.

³⁰⁰ Said, para.3 of 52.

³⁰¹ Jason Dow, 'Finding a Film Along the Way: An Interview with Pen-Ek Ratanaruang', *Metro Magazine: Media and Education Magazine*, 142 (2004), 68-72 (p.72) <10.3316/informit.954534944552708 > [17 June 2020].

³⁰² Vorapoj Phanpong, p.146.

ridiculous.’ And he’d say, ‘Tomorrow you can use another cameraman.’³⁰³ ‘That rhythm became the rhythm of the film,’ he declared later.³⁰⁴

This so-called ‘rhythm’ is what became built into Pen-ek’s advertising apparatus due to the time that the director and the team spent together and developed further through their long-term collaboration since the first feature. This kind of collaboration can result in both positive and negative outcomes. All of the above-the-line collaborators were known as among the best in their fields, but they lacked filmmaking experience during their work on the early features. The shared on-the-job learning that made up *Fun Bar Karaoke* included unintentional lessons, as when the director himself concluded that the film was ‘pretentious, showy, insincere in all departments’³⁰⁵ (translation mine). But once they had gained more experience, their intimacy became fruitful and allowed them to tune into each other in the same way as a jazz ensemble. In other words, it was as the advertising apparatus that the group shared their experience as a jazz performance.

Unlike Wong Kar-wai, Pen-ek still used shooting scripts as his blueprints, rather than a total dependence of improvisation. Both *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves* have a straightforward narrative structure that is punctuated by interruptions, either moments of comedic tone or ‘periodically punctured eruptions of violence.’³⁰⁶ It is unclear if this transformation was self-motivated or a response to discourses surrounding his work. But he has constructed his films in much the same way ever since.

Arguably, Atkinson’s ‘bi-directional flows of influence’³⁰⁷ which continually emit both from the centre outwards and from the outwards inwards, depends on the scope and space of the collaboration. In Pen-ek’s case, it can be argued that the more transnational the project is in nature, the less the flows of influence emanate from the creative core. Atkinson defines filmmaking as ‘an ongoing process of negotiation and compromise between these two dominant circles of influence,’³⁰⁸ and we can see this in Pen-ek’s filmmaking case, which has involved a lot of negotiation and compromise along the way, especially when he began his pan-Asian co-

³⁰³ Clarke, *The Thai Luck Club*, para.12 of 27.

³⁰⁴ Dow, p.72.

³⁰⁵ Vorapoj Phanpong, p.95.

³⁰⁶ Holden, para.1 of 9.

³⁰⁷ Atkinson, p.41.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

productions. The next section will examine how, in constructing Pen-ek as a global author, Fortissimo Films' Wouter Barendrecht adopted the role of 'producer as salesman.'³⁰⁹

2.3 Branding pan-Asian authorship

Unlike Apichatpong and Anocha, Pen-ek is a director who needs a professional producer to supervise his works, either in terms of financing or line-producing. In general, tasks in film production can be divided into two divisions – the creative and financial.³¹⁰ Producers tend to be included in the second group. Sarah Atkinson³¹¹ also categorizes production crews into 'the creative and the logistical' to represent two key tracks of activity – 'practice' and 'process' – which span all phases of film production. The tension between these two tracks intensified during the period when filmmaking adopted a Fordist approach, with studios operating more like factories. The word 'producer' was often used in a derogatory way to imply a troublemaker, a 'cigar-smoking tyrant'³¹² stifling a director's creativity. In film studies, the term is seen as hard to define and subject to slippage.³¹³ The scope of the role may vary according to factors ranging from country, time period, filmmaking method (studio or independent), and even the characteristics of individual studios.³¹⁴ These factors impose different tasks of management, collaboration and creative work. In contemporary mainstream Hollywood, for example, some producers are involved with script acquisitions, hiring crew, sourcing private finance, and play roles in both pre- and post-production. Producers in other territories, might have other tasks, such as applying for state subsidies, casting

³⁰⁹ Christopher Meir, 'The Producer as Salesman: Jeremy Thomas, Film Promotion and Contemporary Transnational Independent Cinema', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 29.4 (2009), 467-481. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439680903180873> [3October 2020].

³¹⁰ Jon Lewis, 'Introduction', in *Producing*, (see above at n.218), pp.1-14 (p.4).

³¹¹ Atkinson, p.2.

³¹² Andrew Spicer, A.T. McKenna, and Christopher Meir, 'Introduction', in *Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies*, ed. by Andrew Spicer, A.T. McKenna, and Christopher Meir (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p.2 <DOI10.5040/9781501300202> [6 May 2020].

³¹³ Meir, p.467; and Alejandro Pardo, 'The Film Producer as a Creative Force', *Wide Screen*, 2.2 (2010), 1-23 (p.1) < <https://widescreenjournal.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/the-film-producer-as-a-creative-force.pdf> > [11 December 2020].

³¹⁴ Joe Kember, 'A Judge of Anything and Everything': Charles Urban and the Role of the 'Producer-Collaborator' in Early British Film', in *Beyond the Bottom Line: The Producer in Film and Television Studies* (see above at n.312), pp.27-43 (p.32).

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roles directly (rather than hiring casting agents), and road-testing new technologies.³¹⁵ Producers may do many jobs at the same time, from investor to artist.³¹⁶

Before the emergence of New Thai Cinema generation in 1997, the producing positions were simply divided between executive producer, line producer and production manager. Executive producer refers to those who invested the money into film and owned the film rights. They usually sent a line producer to oversee the spending cost. Production manager would do coordinating jobs. Usually director directly pitched the project to potential investors. In fact, it can be argued that professional producers by western standard started here; that is, the producer who would be involved in initiating a project, finding a director and scouting the fund. It might be argued that the development of professional producer was partly originated from Pen-ek's pan-Asian projects. Such emerging transitional producers included Nonzee Nimibutr and late Duangkamol Limcharoen who produced Pen-en's works from *Monrak Transistor* and *Last Life in the Universe*. Apichatpong's Thai co-producer also started then with GMM Pictures' independent affiliate TIFA.

In all of Pen-ek's features, the producer has changed more often than the other above-the-line staff. But the practical mode of producing has always been adaptable in such a way that they supported him, rather than obstructed him, to the extent that he has been able to make nine features, more than any of the other advertising directors – even those who worked in genre cinema. Pen-ek's editor Patamanadda testifies to this fact: 'Pen-ek was lucky as his investors tended to understand him and like him, and then gave him a lot of opportunities. I think some of them also love this kind of movie and so they continued to finance his works'³¹⁷ (translation mine). Among the first-generation of New Thai Cinema, he is also one of the most internationally recognized in the film festival circuits, which has allowed him to maintain the relatively non-narrative construction of his films. Pen-ek's producers can be thought of as working in two directions, horizontally and vertically. The vertical direction relates to the actual production and involves producers with different levels of status and responsibility, from executive producers to assistant producers. The horizontal direction relates to activities after production has ended, such as licensing distribution rights, and can be the purview of executive producers, producers, associate

³¹⁵ Mette Hjort, *The Education of the Filmmaker in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), cited in Bill Grantham and Toby Miller, 'The Modern Entertainment Marketplace, 2000-present', in *Producing* (see above at n.218), pp.136-150 (p.136).

³¹⁶ Bill Grantham and Toby Miller, 'The Modern Entertainment Marketplace, 2000-present', in *Producing* (see above at n.218), pp.136-150 (p.136).

³¹⁷ Thanakrit Teosakul, p.256.

producers, and co-producers. Executive directors may head up the production companies who fund and make the films, but they are not usually involved with day-to-day production. Co-producers usually are those who have pre-bought distribution rights in one particular country, and again they have little to do with the actual production. Line producers or associate producers work on day-to-day production tasks, while producers sit between the executive producers and line producers. In Pen-ek's case, the roles of producers vary according to each project and the territory in which they operate. Some of them, such as Wouter Barendrecht, enable processes that Thai producers cannot. He made possible the pan-Asian co-productions structures of *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves* by employing auteur branding strategies that promoted Pen-ek to the world as a global auteur.

Barendrecht and Fortissimo Film Sales had long been known as a new generation of Europe-based international sales agents that emerged during the commercialization of art cinema in the 1990s,³¹⁸ and they were recognized as champions of Asian and independent cinema.³¹⁹ Barendrecht decided to move to Hong Kong in 1996 on Wong Kar-wai's advice,³²⁰ and opened an office there one year later, coinciding with the pan-Asian cinema trend and the emergence of new waves in several countries in Asia. As mentioned earlier, since the 1980s, Asian cinema had been growing continually, first through national film movement such as China's Fifth Generation and New Taiwanese Cinema in the mid-1980s, then New Iranian Cinema in the early 1990s and New Korean Cinema and New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s. This development of national film industries was then superseded by what Ran Ma calls 'Asian integration and regionalization.'³²¹ Intra-Asian collaboration has long happened in the region's film culture, but now it was distinguished by the revitalization of co-production, production, exhibition, and distribution sectors. Olivia Khoo identifies the modernization and economization of Asia since the late 1980s, as well as the reformation of markets in the region, as the main causes of change,³²² but we should not ignore the emergence of new waves in many countries, as well as digital filmmaking, both of which have much to do with this revitalization. By the beginning of the 21st century, collaboration started to

³¹⁸ De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, p.46.

³¹⁹ Liz Shackleton, 'Fortissimo Films Files for Voluntary Bankruptcy', *Screen International*, 17 August, 2016 <<https://www.screendaily.com/news/fortissimo-films-files-for-voluntary-bankruptcy/5108538.article>> (para. 1 of 7).

³²⁰ Clifford Coonan and David Rooney, 'Wouter Barendrecht Dies at 43', *Variety*, 5 April 2009. <<https://variety.com/2009/scene/markets-festivals/wouter-barendrecht-dies-at-43-1118002150/>> [20 September 2020], para.8 of 11.

³²¹ Ma, p.29.

³²² Khoo, p.3.

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expand beyond the continent and connect with Hollywood. The year 2000, for example, saw the global success of Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, which came to be identified as something of a Hollywood product, after distribution rights were bought by Sony Classics, Columbia Pictures-Asia, and Warner Bros in France. The film was a co-production between Chinese investors – Taiwan's Hsu Li-kung and Hong Kong's Bill Kong – director Ang Lee, and James Schamus of New York-based Good Machine.³²³ Other studios like Miramax followed the same line³²⁴ such as Jackie Chan's failed *The Medallion*³²⁵ (2003). Regarding Thailand, the form of pan-Asian collaboration can be seen in two projects in which Nonzee Nimibutr, one of the New Thai Cinema pioneers, worked with Hong Kong-based Applause Pictures, and in Pen-ek's *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*. Owned by director-producer Peter Chan, who used to live in Thailand and speaks perfectly Thai, Applause Pictures produced two projects – Nonzee's *Jan Dara* (2001) and portmanteau horror film *Three* (2002), directed by Korean Kim Jee-woon, Chan and Nonzee. Under the 'pan-Asian cinema' label, Chan considered it marketable to countries like Thailand, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and 'possibly India.'³²⁶

In academia, the notion of pan-Asia is theorized through a variety of approaches, disciplines and discourses – either by textual or contextual modes of reference. Nissim Otmazgin and Eyal Ben-Ari elucidate the term in relation to identity-seeking, one of the mechanisms in the process of 'region-making' that constructs a region or generates an awareness of the region as existing. It is characterized as 'identity-seeking' as it aims to find 'conceptual spaces for the possible emergence of 'pan-Asian identities.'"³²⁷ In cinema, the concept of the pan-Asian is often asserted in relation to co-production and collaboration between East Asian countries, with the market expanding to Southeast Asian countries. Although seen by film theorists in terms of a borrowing of the pan-European film financing model, pan-Asian ideas more generally can be traced back to the 19th century, when collaboration was a way of responding to and struggling against Western imperialism.³²⁸ Ad hoc intra-Asian film collaboration took place from time to time, as seen in the Taiwan-Thailand co-production of *Khoo Kam* (1973), a love story between a Japanese soldier and a

³²³ Darrell William Davis and Emillie Yueh-yu Yeh, *East Asian Screen Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2008), pp.1-4.

³²⁴ Mazurkewich, p.52.

³²⁵ Davis and Yeh, p.28.

³²⁶ Sangjoon Lee, 'The Genealogy of Pan-Asian Big Pictures and the Predicament of the Contemporary South Korean Film Industry,' *Transnational Cinemas*, 3:1 (2012), 93-106 (p.101) <https://doi.org/10.1386/trac.3.1.93_1> [29 November 2021].

³²⁷ Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, p.19.

³²⁸ Davis and Yeh, p.88.

Thai girl during the Second World War. In the present day, pan-Asian film production has been accelerated by globalization, and increasing activity in terms of 'institutional agency, geographical spread, commercial and educational aims, and target viewers in Asia and the West.'³²⁹

Asian film specialists have long acknowledged the asymmetrical flow of power in Asia which entrenches economic and cultural imbalances in the region, such as the way that Southeast Asia tends to become a market for East Asian business, rather than a site of collaboration. Nissim Otmazgin and Eyal Ben-Ari point out that relationships of cooperation and collaboration – in their study, between East Asia and Southeast Asia – arise in 'a structure of centres and peripheries.'³³⁰ Aaron Han Joon Magnan-Park also evokes a similar concern over the prevalence of a term such as 'pan-Asian' cinema, which is still legitimated with 'a regional lockdown favouring East Asia first, South Asia second, and Southeast Asia third.'³³¹ In his view, a continental perspective should be integrated with Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities to create a concept of 'poly-Asian continental imagining communities.' In this way, national and regional viewpoints will be suspended to be replaced by forms of poly-Asian continental consciousness, covering East Asia, Inner Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia as well as the Middle East and Oceania. However, it is unclear how Magnan-Park's idea would be developed and mobilized practically, since his essay is focused only on what should be considered as examples of the so-called poly-Asian continental cinema and practices, without showing the methodology.

In fact, the concept of regionalization has long been interrogated by theorists, due to their concern with plurality in society, economy, and culture. Prasenjit Duara argues that the Asian region has suffered from 'multipath, uneven, and pluralistic development,' which makes it distinct from European regionalism, and that there is a need to build up 'regional awareness' and 'global interdependence,' by promoting the construction of interdependence and 'transnational consciousness' across the continent.³³² In terms of cinema, Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto notes that since the early 2000s the lack of 'a unified discursive field'³³³ has been seen in Asian cinema discourse and thus it should not be reduced to a single definition or meaning. Nor does he agree with the framing of Asian cinema as a 'regional category,' or as 'transnational Asian cinema.' Categorizing

³²⁹ Ibid., p.110.

³³⁰ Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, p.8.

³³¹ Magnan-Park, pp.18-22.

³³² Duara, p.981.

³³³ Yoshimoto, p.256.

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Asian cinema as a regional phenomenon becomes problematic since no unity or coherence of films between nations can be said to exist,³³⁴ yet transnationalizing Asian cinema is the only way to position it as an alternative to Hollywood. Yoshimoto proposes the idea of ‘trans-Asian cinema’ as a ‘transformative, reflexive’ approach, in which ‘the production of films and critical discourse are firmly intertwined.’ Here, one or several national cinemas can be scrutinized within a comparative paradigm that does not aim only for a comparison of quality but manifests the uniqueness of one particular film culture that is different from the others. This idea corresponds to Koichi Iwabuchi’s call for a ‘looking after Europe’³³⁵ approach – a strategy of ‘inter-Asian referencing’ that would develop Asia as the region by ‘de-essentializ[ing]’ and ‘pluraliz[ing]’ the continent.³³⁶ Through ‘cross-border dialogue’³³⁷ – learning and sharing experiences from each other’s culture – Asian people can reconsider their own life and society. Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin finds that the regionalization of East Asia has been achieved in the last two decades by applying a bottom-up approach, rather than by state control. Through regional media alliances, East Asia has decentralized its cultural structures and achieved regional integration in production, promotion, and most importantly ‘indigenization of culture.’³³⁸

With all this in mind, it might be argued that Wouter Barendrecht attempted to construct Pen-ek global auteur credentials by positioning him as part of a ‘pan-Asia’ package of world-class cinema talent – Asian arthouse icon Christopher Doyle, globally recognised actor Asano Tadanobu, and New Thai Cinema pioneer Pen-ek. Barendrecht had handled international sales of Pen-ek’s works beginning with his second feature *Sixty-nine*,³³⁹ and progressed to producing his fourth and fifth movies, *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*, by negotiating presales and bringing in co-producers. Although Pen-ek and New Thai Cinema had already been recognized on the global stage by that time, some stronger identifications were needed to shape Pen-ek as ‘the Thai Wong Kar-wai,’ whose name would become recognized beyond film festival circuits.³⁴⁰ By early 2002, the Thai films making waves around the world were almost exclusively horror movies, alongside those of a few well-known directors such as Nonzee, Pen-ek, and Wisit Sasanatieng, whose debut *Tears of the*

³³⁴ Ibid., pp.258, 260.

³³⁵ Iwabuchi, De-westernisation, Inter-Asian Referencing, p.44.

³³⁶ Ibid., p.49.

³³⁷ Ibid., p.52.

³³⁸ Nissim Kadosh Otmazgin, ‘Cultural Commodities and Regionalization in East Asia’, *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 27.3 (December 2005), 499-523 (p.516) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25798755>> [26 March 2022].

³³⁹ Fortissimo Film Sales, *Feature Films Catalogue 2001/2002* ([n.p.]: Drukkerij Imprimio, 2006), p.4.

³⁴⁰ Mazurkewich, p.52.

Black Tiger (2001) was the first Thai feature to be selected for special screening at the Cannes International Film Festival. Apichatpong came to prominence a few months later with his Cannes debut *Blissfully Yours*. It was still premature to promote Thai films under a single banner – to rely on, as Simon Hobbs puts it, ‘the nation as a brand.’³⁴¹ Using European countries as his case studies, Hobbs argues that audiences tend to perceive the prestige of one particular national cinema through traces of past successes. In the same way as genres, national cinemas are always attached to the names of directors,³⁴² which guide the audience’s expectations. Barendrecht innovative strategy was to attach names from the wider Asian region to his new global auteur since neither the global reputation of Pen-ek nor that of New Thai Cinema was yet strong enough to launch the other.



Figure 2. 2 Pan-Asian cults - Pen-ek with Doyle (left), Kang Hye-jeong in *Invisible Waves* (top right), and Takeshi Miike in *Last Life in the Universe* (bottom right)

Barendrecht employed two strategies – the auteur as brand, and the region as brand – in constructing this new product. Leora Hadas proposes that anything can be used to brand a cinematic product, including the names of media creators, star actors, and familiar characters. Through these elements, a product can develop an identity that gives it the qualities of ‘consistency

³⁴¹ Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, pp.28-9.

³⁴² Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face*, p.38.

and predictability.³⁴³ In this case, Barendrecht used a lead actor, a key crew member, the co-production studios, his company Fortissimo, and last but not least the 'regional hierarchy' of East Asia to construct the image of Pen-ek as a global auteur. Australian-born, Hong Kong-based Christopher Doyle was at the forefront of pan-Asian cinema³⁴⁴ at that time. Japanese actor Asano Tadanobu appealed to audiences on multiple levels, from movie star to cult icon. His mixed heritage (an American grandfather) gives him 'a hint of exotic allure.'³⁴⁵ He was also recognized as 'the king of indies' in Japan and other East Asian territories,³⁴⁶ having worked with many emerging directors, such as Shunji Iwai (*Swallowtail Butterfly*, 1996), Hirokazu Koreeda (*Maborosi*, 1995; *Distance*, 2001), Kiyoshi Kurosawa (*Bright Future*, 2002), and Takeshi Miike (*Ichii the Killer*, 2001), as well as established master Takeshi Kitano (*Zatoichi: The Blind Swordsman*, 2003). The casts of Penek's pan-Asian films also included numerous other East Asian figures in both major and minor roles. In *Last Life in the Universe*, a number of the cast were Japanese, including a cameo appearance by cult director Takashi Miike. In *Invisible Waves*, only one major role was played by a Thai actor, with other nationalities represented by Hong Kong stars Eric Tsang and Maria Cordero, and South Korean actress Kang Hye-jeong as the Thai-Korean (or Korean-Thai) protagonist Noi. The replacement of *Last Life's* Thai female lead by Kang intensified the film's pan-Asian values by connecting it to the Korean Wave (*hallyu*), which had been spreading throughout the region since the 1990s, despite the character played by Kang – who had starred in a number of South Korean global hits including Park Chan-Wook's *Old Boy* (2003) – being seen as only a supporting role in a film that primarily showcases Asano.³⁴⁷ In the same way as Asano, her involvement helped create a transnational identity for the film, signifying the intertextuality between Pen-ek and other pan-Asian auteurs mentioned above. To some extent, Pen-ek was praised as a member of the group of pan-Asian auteurs who were establishing their names at that time. In the fourth chapter I will discuss cinematic paratexts, focusing mainly on promotional materials. But in a way the case of Pen-ek suggests that star identities can be considered paratexts too.

³⁴³ Leora Hadas, 'A New Vision: J. J. Abrams, *Star Trek*, and Promotional Authorship', *Cinema Journal*, 56.2 (2017), 46-66 (p.47) <<https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2017.0002>> [7 September 2020].

³⁴⁴ Hillenbrand, p.66.

³⁴⁵ Anne Ciecko and Hunju Lee, 'Visible Waves: Notes on Koreanness, Pan-Asianness, and Some Recent Southeast Asian Art Films', *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 51 (2009). <<http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc51.2009/VisibleWaves/index.html>> [accessed 21 May 2021] (para. 18 of 21).

³⁴⁶ James Balmont, 'An Introduction to Tadanobu Asano, Japan's Ice-Cool 'King of the Indies'', *AnOther*, 20 October 2020 <<https://www.anothermag.com/design-living/12914/tadanobu-asano-japans-ice-cool-king-of-the-indies-film-japan-zatoichi>> [accessed 4 November 2020] (para. 4 of 21).

³⁴⁷ Ciecko and Lee, para.18 of 21.

Aside from the cast and crew, Barendrecht used the names of two studios – Hong Kong’s Focus Film and South Korean movie powerhouse CJ Entertainment – as a signal of the films’ connection to other star names. The involvement of Focus Films linked *Invisible Waves* to megastar actor Andy Lau, the founder of Focus, while CJ Entertainment provided a link to many South Korean international films such as *Oasis* (Lee Chang-dong, 2002) and *Old Boy* (Park Chan-wook, 2005). In fact, several months later, CJ Entertainment partnered with Focus Films as the Korean distributor of the Focus: First Cuts series of Asian films.³⁴⁸ *Invisible Waves* can be considered their first attempt at co-production. All of these discourses allowed the film to be declared ‘a truly pan-Asian film’ by the Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum.³⁴⁹ According to Otmazgin and Ben-Ari,³⁵⁰ collaboration and co-productions in East and South East Asia, can be considered ‘labels,’ symbolizing modernization and trendiness, and disrupting local and national cinema paradigms. With its associations with non-Thai celebrities and studios, *Invisible Waves* was also labelled as a product of the progressive integration of East Asian film industries, rather than as a symbol of Thai culture.

This pan-Asian collaboration had negative consequences for Pen-ek’s longtime supporter Five Star Production. In *Last Life in the Universe*, the names of Singapore’s Cathay Films Asia, Japan’s Pioneer LDC, and the Hubert Bals Fund were emphasized above Five Star as co-producers.³⁵¹ Sometimes Five Star was misunderstood to be merely the rights holder for the Thai market.³⁵² Five Star was totally absent from *Invisible Waves*’ English-language credits in the press kit, though it was declared as the sole copyright owner in the Thai press kit.³⁵³ We do not know why Japanese companies discontinued co-production after *Invisible Waves*. Probably, Japanese entertainment businesses are often more ‘isolationist,’ probably due to an expansive market, language barriers, cultural differences and historical antipathies, as suggested by Japanese producer Satoru Iseke.³⁵⁴

³⁴⁸ Liz Shackleton, ‘Pusan: CJ Entertainment Joins Focus: First cuts’, *Screen International*, 12 October 2006a <<https://www.screendaily.com/pusan-cj-entertainment-joins-focus-first-cuts/4029091.article>> (accessed 21 May 2021).

³⁴⁹ Ciecko and Lee, para.18 of 21.

³⁵⁰ Otmazgin and Ben-Ari, pp.14-15.

³⁵¹ There is some inconsistent information on various lists of co-production partners. The Thai press kit also suggests France’s Paradis Films as another partner.

³⁵² Liz Shackleton, ‘Last Life Wraps as Bohemian’s First film’, *Screen International*, 10 October 2002 <<https://www.screendaily.com/last-life-wraps-as-bohemians-first-film/4010785.article>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

³⁵³ Five Star Production, *Invisible Waves* (Thai Press Kit), ([n. pub]: [n.d.]) (no pagination).

³⁵⁴ Liz Shackleton, ‘Japan Still on Outer Edge of Pan-Asian Market’, *Screen International*, 25 October 2006b <<https://www.screendaily.com/japan-still-on-outer-edge-of-pan-asian-market/4029285.article>> [accessed 20 September 2020].

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The so-called label of 'modernization and trendiness' applied to both of Pen-ek's pan-Asian films was also underlined by his collaboration with the emerging Thai writer Prabda Yoon, the son of Thai media mogul Suthichai Yoon. Prabda returned to Thailand a few years before 2000 after a decade living in New York, and it took him only a few years to win the S.E.A. Write Award (Southeast Asian Writers Award). *Last Life in the Universe* was his first attempt at writing a film script, and after Pen-ek made several changes to that script, he gave Prabda full freedom on *Invisible Waves*. Prabda's presence added to the sense of freshness that led Barendrecht to announce *Last Life in the Universe* as the first production of Fortissimo's affiliate Bohemian Films, which aimed at 'a fusion of Asian talent and European style financing and co-productions,' and scouted funds from studio partners or presales on a picture-by-picture basis.³⁵⁵

This set of associations – talent sharing, the reputations of co-producers and distributors, as well as the sense of novelty – corresponds to what Leora Hadas calls the 'practices of branding,' which interact with the established discourse of authorship in generating 'promotional authorship.'³⁵⁶ Whereas the established discourse determines the author from the film text, in Hadas' approach the author can be a different person whose authorship is built up through the studio's marketing and promotional plans before the film's releases. Hadas lists necessary factors – 'a certain cohesion,' and 'recognizable characteristics' – for the construction of an authorial brand across a media campaign.³⁵⁷ In Pen-ek's case, the textual authorship and promotional authorship attaches to the same person, and his previous filmmaking style can be mobilized to correspond to the branding of pan-Asian aesthetics shaped by Barendrecht. This evidently guarantees the role of 'producer as salesman,' who focuses on packaging and selling films by exploiting auteurism as a marketing discourse, prioritizing his personal visions over directions, and positioning himself behind the director. In fact, this type of marketing practice is available to an American independent producer skilled in using marketing and promotion to construct his own brand identity, comprising his authorship and his films' genres, themes and content, as Christopher Meir finds in his study of transnational independent cinema produced by Jeremy Thomas.³⁵⁸ In the same way, Barendrecht used auteurism, art cinema as a genre, and an international cast and crew to construct a global

³⁵⁵ Patrick Frater, 'Fortissimo and Kuzui Team Up for Bohemian Films', *Screen International*, 17 May 2002 <<https://www.screendaily.com/fortissimo-and-kuzui-team-up-for-bohemian-films/409258.article>> [accessed 20 September 2020] (para.1 of 9).

³⁵⁶ Hadas, p.48.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.64.

³⁵⁸ Meir, pp.476-481.

brand for the new kind of cinematic product he was pioneering. Here, the auteur is a 'construct',³⁵⁹ whose authorship is asserted in part through the practices of promotion. These 'authorizations'³⁶⁰ – the term that Justin Wyatt borrows from Pauline Kerr – are commercially exploited to attract buyers, festival programmers and critics.

All these branding properties – Doyle's use of colour, Tadanobu's cult status, East Asian studio associations, Fortissimo's arthouse image, and pan-Asian aesthetics – can be considered as 'little authorial personalities'³⁶¹ added to the films, or what John Caldwell terms the 'constructions of an authorial team',³⁶² which he sees as characteristic of the contemporary film industry. In current circumstances, notions of 'singular authorship'³⁶³ are left behind and replaced by collective authorship. As his pan-Asian projects were collaborations with several film industries in Asia, Pen-ek lost his previous authorial identity (derived from his relations with his advertising apparatus) amid the accumulation of outside producers. Those producers can be compared to what Peter Wollen calls 'noises'³⁶⁴ in reference to the filmic signatures of collaborators against the backdrop of the film's structure as driven by the director. Each of them introduces both mutual support and contestation as they seek to influence production and ends up contributing to a paradigm of multiple authorship. Jean Mitry has explained that in the process of filmmaking, creativity and personality are the key elements. Therefore, the strongest personality would always impose itself. 'It is personality ...which distinguishes the directors of real talent. It allows them access to freedom of choice, conception and treatment in the cinema.'³⁶⁵ This personality can also be manifested by crew members who have significant power and authority. The 'noise' can also influence film production, circulation, and exhibition as these have changed under the rubric of a global film industry,³⁶⁶ exemplified by the involvement of numerous producer agents in Pen-ek's pan-Asian collaboration. In consequence, the interdependent multiple authorship of Pen-ek's pan-Asian movies hardly presented him as a full primary author in the classic sense. His authorship operated

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p.472.

³⁶⁰ Wyatt, p.51.

³⁶¹ Casper Tybjerg, 'The Makers of Movies: Authors, Subjects, Personalities, Agents?', in *Visual Authorship: Creativity and Intentionality in Media*, ed. by Torben Grodal, Bente Larsen, and Iben Thorving Laursen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2005), pp.37-65 (p.44).

³⁶² Caldwell, 'Para-Industry, Shadow Academy', pp.726-7.

³⁶³ Ibid., p.725.

³⁶⁴ Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p.85.

³⁶⁵ Jean Mitry, *The Aesthetics and Psychology of the Cinema* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), cited in Alejandro Pardo, 'The Film Producer as a Creative Force', *Wide Screen*, 2.2 (2010), 1-23 (p.12) <<https://widescreenjournal.org/the-film-producer-as-a-creative-force/>> [accessed 11 December 2020].

³⁶⁶ King and Miller, p.478.

through a process of mutual consent between his collaborators and himself. In this case, the director can be seen as one of the authors of the movie. Whether he is accentuated as the lead author or not is dependent on the role of the other authorial personalities visible in the film.

2.4 The negotiation of global authorship

Wouter Barendrecht's role in Pen-ek's global profile signifies the importance of middle-persons who bridge the gap between Asian cinema and the western world. But this is still underexplored in academia. Dina Iordanova, one of the few theorists who has written extensively on the role of these middle-persons, whom she calls 'sole-traders,'³⁶⁷ defines them – in the context of East Asian festival films – as those who travel between festivals introducing Asian cinema to other parts of the world, especially the West, such as festival programmers, critics and journalists, producers and sales agents. Her lists include both those from the West and from Asia. In my experience, with the rise of Asian cinema in the festival circuits, a number of sole-traders now work as consultants for film festivals around the world, not only in the West. Some of these consultants work for more than one event, such as the Italian consultant Paolo Bertolin and the former artistic director of Singapore International Film Festival Philip Cheah. Both support Thai independent directors, including Anocha Suwichakornpong. They have a significant role as 'promoters,' while filmmakers are the 'beneficiaries' of this promotion.³⁶⁸ SooJeong Ahn also finds that the roles of middle-persons – she calls them 'cultural intermediaries'³⁶⁹ in her exploration of the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF)³⁷⁰ – become visible as a part of the selection process at International Film Festival of Rotterdam's CineMart and the PIFF's Pusan Promotional Plan (PPP), building networks and mediating relationships among the filmmakers and film institutions. Significantly, they might have a role in shaping trends in Asian cinema, which she thinks remains inadequately studied.

The careers of all three directors in my thesis have been affected by sole-traders. Barendrecht and Simon Field, both of whom are mentioned in Iordanova and Ahn's essays, have been key supporters to Pen-ek and Apichatpong, though in different ways, while Anocha's career path has been

³⁶⁷ Dina Iordanova, 'East Asia and Film Festivals: Transnational Clusters for Creativity and Commerce', in *Film Festival Yearbook 3: Film Festivals and East Asia*, ed. by Dina Iordanova and Ruby Cheung (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2011), pp.1-33 (p.12).

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

³⁶⁹ SooJeong Ahn, *The Pusan International Film Festival, South Korean Cinema and Globalization* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), p.109. Google eBook.

³⁷⁰ The author remains using the original name of the festival.

influenced by Gertjan Zuilhof, the former IFFR programmer covering Southeast Asia cinema between 1990 and 2016.³⁷¹ Even when Pen-ek decided to go independent – after the deaths of Barendrecht and Five Star Entertainment’s head Charoen lamphungporn – there were still some ‘noises’ that affected his subsequent filmmaking journey. Another junior producer, Raymond Phathanavirangoon, can also be credited as playing a part in the story of Pen-ek’s later projects. Phathanavirangoon, a former Fortissimo Films marketing director, was involved in coordinating between Thailand and European co-production schemes for *Headshot* (2011), a story about an ex-policeman who sees everything upside down after being shot in the head, and *Samui Song* (2017), the story of a woman whose husband has become a fanatical believer in a religious cult.

Unlike Apichatpong and Anocha, both of Pen-ek’s independent projects were largely funded by local players. Under the producer’s company Local Colour Film, *Headshot* received a ฿8 million (£200,000) fund from the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture Thailand as a foundation budget; while *Samui Song* was supported by Cinema22 – a gathering of a group of businessmen who has so far invested only in Anocha’s *By the Time It Gets Dark* and *Samui Song*. In *Headshot*, the rest investors mostly came from international industrial players like Memento Films International – French international sales agent, as well as Wild Side Films – an Italian production companies, and associated only with Sweden’s Göteborg International Film Festival Fund and the Tokyo Project Gathering of Tokyo International Film Festival. But this was not the case for *Samui Song*. Lacking necessary funds, *Samui Song* had to travel around the world seeking all possible financial resources, from private funding to festival schemes, eventually raising the money from a group of Thai people called Cinema 22, Thailand’s Ministry of Culture, the Berlin International Film Festival’s World Cinema Fund, and the Norwegian South Film Fund. These foreign funds require local companies in each country to be a part of the project, in particular Germany’s Augenschein Filmproduktion and Norway’s Tenk.TV. In this new network of European-oriented film funding, the role of producer has been changing from what Barendrecht had done as a salesman during Pen-ek’s pan-Asian projects to a coordinating role between local and overseas representatives. Both of Pen-ek’s later films had other distributors in charge of international sales – *Headshot* was represented by Memento International, who were in charge of selling several Thai independent films and producing high-profile director-driven independent films at that time³⁷²; *Samui Song* was handled overseas by Paris-based Urban Distribution International – a sales agent that has represented the works of

³⁷¹ More details in Chapter 4.

³⁷² So far the company only co-produced *Headshot* and distributed Aditya Assarat’s *Wonderful Town* (2008). Cinando, ‘Memento International’, Cinando, 2022. <https://cinando.com/en/Company/memento_international_1938/Detail> [accessed 27 December 2022].

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promising young and renowned filmmakers since 2004.³⁷³ However, Phathanavirangoon started to be involved in the creative side of *Samui Song* by contributing to the film's story.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, the casting of some international performers in the movie was reminiscent of the strategy that Barendrecht and Pen-ek had used during the making of *Last Life in the Universe* and *Invisible Waves*. Many major roles in the movies were taken by Thai actors who had been cast in foreign movies – Vithaya Pansringarm, cast as the cult leader in *Samui Song*, had appeared in Todd Phillips' *The Hangover Part II* (2011) and Nicolas Winding Refn's *Only God Forgives* (2013); David Asavanond had appeared in Ryuhei Kitamura's *Lupin III* (2014) – or eye-catching European figures such as Stephane Sednaoui, a noted French music video director for Björk and U2.



Figure 2. 3 Vithaya Pansringarm in *Samui Song* and Stephane Sednaoui in *Samui Song* (right)

Looking at the details of Pen-ek's directing style, it is difficult to identify the traits of single authorship, though the discourses surrounding his filmmaking introduce noise into any assessment. Having not gone to film school, he is typically treated as a self-taught filmmaker, bringing his own method of cinematic experimentation. As an autodidact filmmaker, his works were often influenced by other directors, especially at the beginning of his directing career. His first three features are plot-driven with straightforward narratives involving crime and the alienation of less-privileged members of society, arguably influenced by his awareness of the underdeveloped locality of Thailand in the 1970s prior to his study in New York as contrasted with the ultra-modernity experienced during his formative years in the US. In his first two features, *Fun Bar Karaoke* and *Sixtynin9*, loneliness is explicitly explored as the major cause of the personal crises faced by the protagonists. *Fun Bar Karaoke* plays with the culture of Thai superstition against the backdrop of Bangkok modernity through the romance between a young Thai-American hitman dreaming of

³⁷³ Urban Sales, 'About Us', *Urban Sales*, 2022 <<https://www.urbandistrib.com/about-us/>> [accessed 27 December 2022].

³⁷⁴ *Samui Song* (English Press Kit), ([n. pub]: [n.d.]), p.3.

searching for his father in the US and a teenage girl haunted by recurring dreams of her deceased mother. His second picture, *Sixty-nine*, follows the mishaps that strike a young laid-off woman during the economic crisis after her discovery of a misplaced cash box. Made during the rise of the American independents, both films were influenced by Quentin Tarantino and the Coen Brothers. In *Fun Bar Karaoke*, the gangster's uniform reminded the audience of the suits worn by the mafia in the 1980s Hong Kong action films of John Woo or Tsui Hark, to which Tarantino often pays homage. However, the director defended this similarity by arguing that there were differences in the details: '[I] deal with the main plot, then jumping to the subplot, and on with main plot, mixing it together without chronology or segment,' against a narrative of segmentation in the work of the American director.³⁷⁵ The influence of 1990s American independent was also noted by *Variety*, whose reviewer criticised the black comedy of chaotic mishaps in *Sixty-nine* as 'an unsophisticated foray into Coen brothers territory.'³⁷⁶



Figure 2. 4 American influence: *Fun Bar Karaoke* (left), *Sixty-nine* (right)



Figure 2. 5 Paradox of changes: *Monrak Transister* (left), and *Last Life in the Universe* (right)

³⁷⁵ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'Thai Madness to Stir up Berlin Film Festival', *Nation*, 14 February 1997, section c, p. C1.

³⁷⁶ David Rooney, 'Sixty-nine', *Variety*, 5 March 2000 <<https://variety.com/2000/film/reviews/sixty-nine-1200461439/>> [accessed 20 September 2020] (para. 3 of 3).

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Such global film references were worked into the rollercoaster life of a rural man dreaming of becoming a folk singer in Pen-ek's third feature *Monrak Transistor*, based on an adaptation of famous Thai writer Wat Wanlayangkoon's realist novel under the same title. The character type of the rural naïf replaces those of youngster and white-collar worker in the modern city. The settings of modern apartments, offices and 24-hour kiosks in the first two features are substituted with the spectacle of the countryside, and the use of folk songs. In retrospect, this shift can be seen as a response to the international success of his contemporary Wisit Sasanatieng's *Tears of the Black Tiger*, which was officially selected as the first Thai film at Cannes, after being submitted by Fortissimo Films. While *Tears of the Black Tiger* is a tribute to old Thai cowboy films, *Monrak Transistor* is reminiscent of a Thai musical, in which the director declared his finding during the scriptwriting process.³⁷⁷ Coincidentally or not, Wisit contributed to *Monrak Transistor* by composing a song "The Sad Soldier" in the protagonist's singing contest scenes.³⁷⁸ By suspending the modern themes and aesthetics embraced in his earlier films and instead glorifying rural spectacle and reinventing old film genres (musical, comedy, romance and drama), Pen-ek indulges in old stereotypes of the Thai nation, falling into what Thomas Elsaesser³⁷⁹ identifies as 'a sort of auto-exoticism' in order to present something unusual and appealing to a global film audience. *Monrak Transistor* is reminiscent of one of the all-time Thai film hits *Country Boy Serenade* (Monrak Lookthing, Rangsee Tasanapayak, 1970),³⁸⁰ that drew attraction from local audiences, against the flood of foreign films that were targeted the urban during the film's release.³⁸¹ Ironically, the revival of this style of filmmaking is a reversal: instead of using localness to appeal to domestic audiences, it is used to export Thai films to foreign markets.

Here, the directors turn to be 'specialists' working under the requirements of related institutions – the festival circuit and the global arthouse market – by employing what Elsaesser calls 'adaptive strategies.'³⁸² In Pen-ek's case, he accepted the conditions of the market in cultural capital, reputation and recognition, perhaps because his advertising experience had accustomed him to working under customer demand, or perhaps because his on-the-job training in filmmaking had

³⁷⁷ Rayns, no pagination.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Elsaesser, *The Global Author*, p.29.

³⁸⁰ Kanok, 'Monrak Lookthung', *OK Nation.net*, Wednesday February 2010 <<https://www.oknation.net/หัวข้อ/Kanok/634e7c29db6aba0ec9d36390>> [27 March 2023].

³⁸¹ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, *Khwan Samnuekruam Nai Phattanakarn Silpa Lae Karnwijarn Khong Thai 2475-2550: Papphayon*, pp.31-33.

³⁸² Elsaesser, *The Global Author*, p.29.

always allowed him to find his stylistic signature through experimentation. His journey had made him a pragmatic filmmaker, and so changing strategy to follow the global trend that he was expected to be a part of it as no difficulty to him, and the fact that Thai cinema was in transition did not disorient him. He followed the path described by Hodsdon of an author who ‘encases’ himself into an institutional framework – in this case, the film festival circuit – to sustain and enhance his profile: ‘The acclaim they receive allows these auteurs to encase themselves in a quasi-celebrity bubble which can distort the individual’s perspective on the creative self.’³⁸³

Usually, these types of cinematic and textual adjustment are more useful to the works of independent filmmakers for their recognition in film festivals and distributors.³⁸⁴ Although film festivals did not offer many opportunities for independent filmmakers during the period when Pen-ek started out, to be a part of the institutional mode of art cinema described by Steve Neale and David Andrews was beneficial to his career. He had to depend on others and has just set up his production company Bluering Co with his latest film *Samui Song*. Furthermore, through his self-learning practice and changing niche film industry, Pen-ek’s subjectivity is like a pendulum swinging between his own search for an authorial style and his compromises with institutional discourses of global art cinema in order to maintain his place on the international stage. If he wishes a more distinct individual cinematic style to show in his work, he may need to become less pragmatic and shut out some of the ‘noise’ coming from the other authorial voices evident in his films.

2.5 Conclusion

This account of Pen-ek’s cinema and his filmmaking trajectory suggests some new findings interlinking studies of authorship and the rise of Asian global art cinema, as well as the development of Thai and Asian transnational cinema that has taken place in the last three decades, which can be useful not only in the Asian academic circle but also to Southeast Asian policymakers. From the global perspective, this research can be seen as one of the first attempts to explore the notion of collaborative authorship within the paradigm of Asian art cinema. Earlier examinations of authorship were usually focused on textual analysis, although some paratextual/contextual points of views can be found in Wikanda Phromkhunthong’s writings. From this case study of Pen-ek, we

³⁸³ Hodsdon, p.274.

³⁸⁴ Sudarat Musikawong, ‘Working Practices in Thai Independent Film Production and Distribution,’ *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8:2, pp.248-261<<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370701238722>> [accessed 26 May 2022].

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can see for the first time that collaborative authorship – despite its potential existence within the arms of independent production – is not a fixed practice, but can be changeable at any time in the course of one director's filmmaking life. It can be argued that the more transnational the project is in nature, the less the flows of collaboration will grow, exemplified by his loss of control over his pan-Asian co-productions. But Pen-ek, as his own scriptwriter and director remains the primary author within that advertising apparatus.

However, under the international discourse of global film arts, his directing ability has lost its power but was shifted only to demonstrate as an 'institutional context of authorship'³⁸⁵ which engenders multiple signatures. Robert Carringer suggests this term as a second phase of collaborative analysis when the primary author is reinscribed after his single primacy has been suspended. This perspective suggests that the roles of producers in the construction of global authors are not so different from those in the commercial film industry. Although there has been much scholarly exploration of the work of producers with regard to Hollywood – both in relation to American mainstream and independent film circles – little has been done concerning global art cinema, especially those transnational producers who connect projects from 'emerging' cinema industries with film communities in the global north. The term 'emerging cinema industry' in my definition belongs to those countries that have previously been least related – politically, economically, socially or culturally – with western nations, either in the paradigm of colonialism or economic reliance. In other words, it is cinema that connects those who have not been closely connected before. As a result, this mutual exchange has brought together east and west, under-developed and developed film industries, and indigenous and transnational cinema. It can be argued that this study is one of a few to focus on the production of the global Asian art film, especially in this chapter's consideration of Wouter Barendrecht, who has long been regarded as a key contributor to Asian cinema.

We can say that Barendrecht successfully tried new approaches to promoting the filmmakers he represented at a time when public funds were relatively scarce, and his pan-Asian approach did draw global attention to Pen-ek's works. Barendrecht was willing to develop whatever strategies were necessary to attract available funds, and to vary them from continent to continent. In Asia, where independent companies were still few in number and not well developed, he was able to involve studios, and his practices of branding reflect this: they are a complex blend of what I define as the 'paratextual' elements of pan-Asian branding, including the names of studios and sales

³⁸⁵ Carringer, p.377.

agents, the linkages of cast members to their previous directors, and pan-Asian aesthetics. Historically, the asymmetric flow of communication in Asia has led Southeast Asia to be seen as a cultural consumer, rather than a producer. By positing Pen-ek as a pan-Asian star, Barendrecht boosted, in my words, the region as a brand. Furthermore, instead of depending on film festivals, international co-productions, and European and American niche markets – the well-known institutional platforms for art cinema – he pioneered another method that has now spread through Asia, the presale approach. As a result, unlike the films of Anocha Suwichakornpong, which will be discussed in chapter 4, and have hardly been distributed outside the film festival circuit, most of Pen-ek's works have proved saleable everywhere, sometimes even in fairly wide releases, such as *Last Life in the Universe's* engagement at the GSC multiplex chain in Malaysia.³⁸⁶ Both of these two theoretical concepts – producing Asian art cinema, and region as brand – are important outcomes of this research project that will be useful for both Asian policymakers and global art cinema theorists and can be applied to the study of other regions.

In this regard, Pen-ek's authorship as constructed by Barendrecht as a mechanism for co-production and sales merely follows what Michael Foucault calls as the 'author-function,' which:

...is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy.³⁸⁷

The recourse to Bourdieu's ideas on sociology is well justified here. The discourse of global art cinema is comparable to what Bourdieu discussed as the 'social world' – to be more specific, the film industry in Thailand and the global art cinema circle. Instead of attaching himself to the idea of the author as the sole creator of art, Bourdieu believed that – through his study of literary and artistic worlds – cultural works have to be analysed in relation to the 'social world,' integrating a group of cultural producers, not a single author. The sociological connections underpinning the logics of the production process must be employed in our studies so that cultural works are perceived as 'the symbolic expression' of the 'social world.'³⁸⁸ It has to include a 'social group' as a

³⁸⁶ Personal experience. The writer lived in the country for the research funded by Nippon Foundation.

³⁸⁷ Foucault, p.289.

³⁸⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.202.

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relational factor in the analysis of the field since it usually performs its worldview on works of art by either influencing or receiving the work constructed by the artist. According to Bourdieu, the 'social characteristics' – either of the artists or of the groups – have to be brought into the analysis of cultural production to complement assertions about the artistic expression embedded in cultural works. It is unreasonable to treat a work of art as 'a sort of free and conscious act of auto-determination' based on a reading of the origin of human existence in which all subsequent acts emerge within the realm of 'a pure freedom.'³⁸⁹

Furthermore, by insisting on the western and eastern, as well as empirical and theoretical distinctions between working notions and practices, I have tried to create a dialectic grounding for my discussion. Pen-ek's project-based semi-permanent employment – which would be considered a practice unfair to freelance film crews in the western tradition, either in terms of employment, training or welfare opportunities – seems to be twisted in the Thai or Southeast Asian arts communities. In Thailand, many practitioners make a living from some other career and practice arts for personal satisfaction, exemplified by the theatre artists who survive financially by accepting acting roles in television series, or the switching between advertising and cinema work by Pen-ek and his peers. This practice has two effects. On one hand, it can enable artists to maintain a balance between survival and creativity. On the other hand, it allows many powerful people to take advantages of the aspirations of young artists. This situation has been raised recently by the industry and by academics.³⁹⁰ In consequence, it might be useful for the Thai or Southeast Asian governments to conduct similar studies that focus on these problems, and find the best practices that will better support freelancers. Furthermore, this research can be counted as one of the first in Thailand to introduce the concept of regional hierarchy into the study of Thai global art cinema. The Thai government has long attempted to use soft power policies to promote Thai cinema abroad, especially by using the Korean wave as a model, without understanding the imbalanced flow of exchange between East and Southeast Asia. In fact, some reversals of thought are needed in the analysis of transnational Thai popular cinema in order to overcome its limited geographical reach by maximizing the size of its audience.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., p.188.

³⁹⁰ The research was conducted with below-the-line crew who encountered four domains of problems – physical and psychological health issues, social relationships and environmental issues. Natthanun Tiammek and Jessada Salathong, 'An Exploration on Quality-of-Life Problems of Laborers in Thai Film Industry,' *Humanities and Social Sciences Academic Journal*, 3.1 (2022), 85-109 (p.86).

Chapter 3 Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Post-Interstitial Authorship

I'd like to think that I do not represent any nation or any country. But you cannot deny that I share the same crew and the same equipment and facilities as other Thai filmmakers. So I think I am somehow part of it. But when I think about the movie itself, it is not for Thailand.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul ³⁹¹

Among the Thai art filmmakers in this study – or the whole generation of New Thai Cinema – Apichatpong Weerasethakul is internationally the best-known. At the time of writing, he has made nine features, namely, *Mysterious Object at Noon* (Dokfa nai meuman, 2000), *Blissfully Yours* (Sud sanaeha, 2002), *The Adventures of Iron Pussy* (Hua jai tor ra nong, co-directed, 2003), *Tropical Malady* (Sud pralad, 2004), *Syndromes and a Century* (Sang sattawat, 2006), *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (Loong Boonmee raleuk chat, 2010), *Mekong Hotel* (2012), *Cemetery of Splendour* (Rak ti Khon Kaen, 2015), and *Memoria* (2021). All of them have been circulated both in general releases and film festival circuits, and several have appeared in polls voted by film specialists and critics around the world. *Tropical Malady* was ranked No.95 in *Sight & Sound's* 2022 The Greatest Films of All Time,³⁹² while *Syndromes and a Century*, *Tropical Malady*, and *Blissfully Yours* all appeared in the top 20 of the Cinematheque Ontario's poll of the best films made between 2000 and 2009, with *Syndromes* topping the list.³⁹³ His works have also been praised by other global filmmakers. *Mysterious Object at Noon* – an experimental documentary that uses the exquisite corpse party game to tell a story made up by Thai villagers as the filmmaker travels from the north to the south of the country, was shortlisted as one of the six films to be preserved by the Martin Scorsese-supported Film Foundation's World Cinema Project No. 2. Three of his films – *Tropical Malady*, *Syndromes and a Century*, and *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* – were listed

³⁹¹ Baumgärtel, p.189.

³⁹² BFI, 'Sight and Sound's The Greatest Films of All Time', *Sight and Sound*, December 2022 <<https://www.bfi.org.uk/sight-and-sound/greatest-films-all-time>> [accessed 2 December 2022].

³⁹³ Michael Sicinski, 'Bifurcated Time: Ulrich Köhler / Apichatpong Weerasethakul', in *The Berlin School and Its Global Contexts: A Transnational Art Cinema*, ed. by Jaimey Fisher and Marco Abel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), pp.193-210 (p.193).

by Paul Thomas Anderson among his 65 favourite films.³⁹⁴ The Berlin School filmmaker Ulrich Köhler cites Apichatpong as a major new voice in world cinema, and they both have been influenced by each other's works. Köhler has drawn most direct inspiration from Apichatpong by using the bifurcated structure and the collision between 'civilized'³⁹⁵ and 'jungled' lifeworlds in his *Sleeping Sickness* (2011), about the experience of the manager of a special sleeping sickness programme in Cameroon. Apichatpong then paid tribute to Köhler by borrowing the theme of sleeping sickness as the main symptom of his military patients in *Cemetery of Splendour*. These are just some examples of tributes shared by both world filmmakers and Apichatpong himself.

In terms of aesthetics, Apichatpong's works are also most complicated because of his interest in combining elements of Thai popular culture and avant-garde cinema. His movies are said to negotiate 'between indigenous Thai culture and the international vernacular of high modernist cinema.'³⁹⁶ Alternatively, he has used an intensely 'postmodern' approach to create a new form of art cinema that negotiates and confronts a convergence between media practices and the 'spatiotemporal aesthetics they articulate.'³⁹⁷ Influenced by the American avant-garde and various European directors – to name a few, Jean-Marie Straub/Danièle Huillet,³⁹⁸ Jean Luc Godard and Pier Paolo Pasolini³⁹⁹ – Apichatpong has plucked an entirely new cinematic language from his imagination. Michael Sicinski has praised him as one of the main contributors to twenty-first-century aesthetic discourse, whose cinema has become a powerful medium that produces 'tactile analogies for the spiritual realm' and examines 'the intermixing and "tug" of ghostly presences on ordinary lived existence.'⁴⁰⁰ His works vibrantly disrupt the familiar narrative form by using methods such as bifurcated structure, elliptical editing and long takes to portray stories that are based on his own memories of Thai life and culture.

³⁹⁴ Swapnil Dhruv Bose, 'From Kubrick to Tarantino: Paul Thomas Anderson made a list of his 65 favourite films', *Far Out*, 14 June 2021 < <https://faroutmagazine.co.uk/paul-thomas-anderson-favourite-films-list-65/> > [accessed 17 February 2021].

³⁹⁵ Sicinski, p.205.

³⁹⁶ Nicholas Mercer, 'Between the Global and the Local: The Cultural Geopolitics of Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Film Aesthetics', in *Linguistics, Literature and Culture: Millennium Realities and Innovative Practices in Asia*, ed. by Shakila Abdul Manan and Hajar Abdul Rahim (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp.191-216 (p.192).

³⁹⁷ Kim Jihoon, 'Between Auditorium and Gallery: Perception in Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Films and Installations', in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (see above at n.29), pp.125-141.

³⁹⁸ Kent Jones, cited in Yuanyuan Wang (see above at n.136), p.1.

³⁹⁹ James Quandt, cited in Yuanyuan Wang, p.1.

⁴⁰⁰ Sicinski, p.196.

Apichatpong's works are also the most controversial discussed in this study, polarizing audiences, and critics⁴⁰¹ ever since *Blissfully Yours* won the Un Certain Regard Prize in Cannes 2002.⁴⁰² Two years later, the jury headed by Quentin Tarantino echoed the same reaction upon the presentation of the Special Jury Prize to *Tropical Malady*.⁴⁰³ This phenomenon continued even when the Palme d'Or was presented to him for *Uncle Boonmee Who Remembers His Past Lives* in 2010. Having been present at that event, I remember that several festivalgoers refused to watch the film, claiming it as an artwork, not a film. However, the film also received a long-standing ovation after its gala screening.

This chapter examines the global rise of Apichatpong by examining his films in terms of **financing**, **consisting of** a number of conceptual approaches – his 'homemade'⁴⁰⁴ filmmaking style, Wikanda Phromkhuntong's⁴⁰⁵ theory of emotional capital and Bourdieu's social capital, Anne Jäckel's 'variegated film industries' model⁴⁰⁶ and Daren C. Brabham's notion of 'distributed financing,'⁴⁰⁷ adapted from his study of American independent cinema's crowdfunding and fundraising methods. I suggest that Apichatpong has constructed a new model of independent co-production by incorporating all possible forms of finance at the global level, ranging from Europe, Asia, US and South America, and by finding opportunities that emerge from what Hamid Naficy calls 'the cracks of the system'⁴⁰⁸ in the global film and visual arts sectors. Through his personal 'democratic art'⁴⁰⁹ network, he maintains his cinematic style by finding the balance between individual creativity and external funding opportunities. This mode of filmmaking – which Nuno Bararadas Jorge calls

⁴⁰¹ Baumgärtel, p.179.

⁴⁰² David Rooney, 'U.S. Catches Thai 'Malady' via Strand', *Variety*, 20 July 2004 <<https://variety.com/2004/film/markets-festivals/u-s-catches-thai-malady-via-strand-1117908045>> [accessed 9 December 2020] (para. 3 of 7).

⁴⁰³ Tim Gray, 'Tarantino Sez '9/11' Won on the Merits', *Variety*, 23 May 2004 <<https://variety.com/2004/film/markets-festivals/tarantino-sez-9-11-won-on-the-merits-1117905451/>> [accessed 9 December 2020] (para.6 of 9).

⁴⁰⁴ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, *Pa-Ti-Bat-Karn-Nang-Thun-Kham-Chat / Transnational Funded Film Operation* (Bangkok: Openbooks, 2010), p.201.

⁴⁰⁵ Wikanda Phromkhuntong, p.41.

⁴⁰⁶ Anne Jäckel, *European Film Industries* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), p.25.

⁴⁰⁷ Daren C. Brabham, *Crowdsourcing* (MIT Press, 2013), p.39 < <https://ieeexplore-ieee-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/servlet/opac?bknumber=6517605> > [27 June 2022].

⁴⁰⁸ Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p.46.

⁴⁰⁹ Yannis Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema*, 2nd ed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), p.251 <<https://www-jstor-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1vw0rhw>> [26 June 2022].

'independence and co-dependence'⁴¹⁰ – is being adopted by independent filmmakers around the world, who depend on national and international funding to make films that are limited to specific audience groups. By adopting Bourdieu's concept of the field of production and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, it is possible to show how he negotiates power in the field of production through the use of his 'democratic art' network, and by acting as a global 'post-interstitial' filmmaker whose authorship is characterized by mobility and multiplicity.

3.1 The encounter of 'emotional/social capital' and 'variegated Film Industries'

Among the three directors in this study, Apichatpong's mode of financing is also the most complicated, comprising both private and public producers in the film and visual arts sectors. These vary from film funds, film companies, broadcasters, and visual arts organizations. Whereas the European co-production model is based primarily around European stakeholders, Apichatpong has expanded this model to bring in supporters from Asia, the US, and South America, resulting in productions that are arguably different from those of other global auteurs. Unlike Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Apichatpong has served as his own producer, even doing line-producing chores himself.⁴¹¹ Due to the limited budget of each project, it is difficult for him to employ professional producers to supervise production work.⁴¹² Although there might be several international producers involved in his projects, these people have merely handled the funding part in their respective territories, rather than being involved with the total project development, with the occasional exception, such as Simon Field. However, unlike Anocha Suwichakornpong, who has also scouted funds from international sources, Apichatpong has regular supporters like British producer Simon Field from UK-based Illumination Films and Charles de Meaux from Paris-based company Anna Sanders Films.

All of Apichatpong's works follow an expanded version of the European co-production model except two of his earliest works, *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000) and *The Adventures of Iron Pussy*

⁴¹⁰ Nuno Bararadas Jorge, *ReFocus: The Films of Pedro Costa: Producing and Consuming Contemporary Art Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), p.57
<DOI:10.3366/Edinburgh/9781474444538.001.0001> [6 January 2021].

⁴¹¹ Baumgärtel, p.184.

⁴¹² Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, pp.213, 218.

(2003). The Council of Europe refers to ‘co-production’⁴¹³ as ‘the production of an audiovisual work by more than one producer,’ each of whom ‘co-owns the work’, and is ‘agreed upon via a co-production contract.’ Eurimages director Roberto Olla⁴¹⁴ classifies the European film industry’s co-productions into two kinds – ones where the stakeholders share the financial contributions and risks; and ones that are based on tax incentives. In the Canadian context, co-production is considered to be the only viable approach to developing a ‘world-class’ film⁴¹⁵ and keeping the industry in a healthy balance. Here it is divided into four types: public- and private-sector co-productions within a given country; public- and private-sector co-productions involving different countries; private capital from different countries; and treaty co-productions. Treaty co-productions mean the collaborations between countries by using some public funds in the production process so that the film is legally accepted as domestic or “national” (emphasis original). In Thailand, co-production was an emerging concept, more related to transnational collaboration during the rise of pan-Asian cinema. Before then, only a few projects belonged in this category, such as the Thailand-Taiwan production *Khoo Kam* (The Destined Couple, 1973). All of Apichatpong’s features, except those mentioned films, followed this fourth category of practices. A homage and parody of 1970s Thai action films, telling the story of a cross-dressing secret agent, *The Adventures of Iron Pussy* was co-produced by the director and local studio GMM Pictures, a subsidiary of one of Thailand’s biggest entertainment corporations. Apichatpong co-directed it with another visual artist, Michael Shaowanaisai, who also played the lead role. *Mysterious Object at Noon* initially received financial support from several non-cinema organizations like the James Nelson Foundation, Toshiba and Fuji Film, before the International Film Festival of Rotterdam’s Hubert Bals Fund became involved. The Rotterdam funding meant he was able to continue and transfer from 16mm to 35mm.⁴¹⁶ But it did not follow the European co-production paradigm, since the two producers who were fellow friends – Gridthiya Gaweewong and Mingmongkol Sonakul - involved with the project represented only Thailand. As a young film graduate who wanted to make

⁴¹³ Council of Europe, ‘Brochure Cannes 2018’, *Council of Europe*, May 2018, p.3 <<https://rm.coe.int/brochure-cannes-2018/16808ae9fa>> [28 May 2022].

⁴¹⁴ Petar Mitric and Joella Levie, *Medici Report 5: International Co-productions, Development, Gender and Quotas*, Annual Report, FOCAL (Lozanne: FOCAL, 2016), cited in Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric, and Eva Novrup Redvall, ‘Introduction: European Film and Television Co-production’, in *European Film and Television Co-production: Policy and Practice*, ed. by Julia Hammett-Jamart, Petar Mitric, and Eva Novrup Redvall (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp.1-26 (p.13) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-97157-5_9> [accessed 10 November 2020]

⁴¹⁵ Manjunath Pendakur, *Canadian Dreams and American Control: The Political Economy of the Canadian Film Industry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp.194-5 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/j.ctvg2526p>> [accessed 28 May 2022].

⁴¹⁶ Sudarat Musikawong, p.255.

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his first feature-length documentary outside the studio-based industry at a time when there were only a few full independent filmmakers in Thailand,⁴¹⁷ Apichatpong tried all possible ways to raise funds and cut technical costs. All of his film crew were volunteers or were recommended by someone with a clear declaration that no payment would be given.⁴¹⁸ Many of them had just graduated, had little experience of making movies, and usually took responsibility for more than one job. This structure operated more like an amateur paradigm, one that Apichatpong identifies as a 'home-made' filmmaking style,⁴¹⁹ referring to working practices where everyone pitched in and joined together like a family. The director had doubted that it would be possible to bring back that kind of on-set atmosphere to the contemporary mode of filmmaking.⁴²⁰

These characteristics of social bonding between the director and related stakeholders have often been repeated in Apichatpong's mode of production, especially during the formative years of his career, firstly among the crew of *Mysterious Object at Noon* and *Blissfully Yours*, who helped him with no expectation of payment. Producers Simon Field and Charles de Meaux have also long supported Apichatpong, Field being one of the first people in the international film world with whom the director became acquainted during his first attempt to gain funding from the International Film Festival of Rotterdam (IFFR), where Field was the festival director. Meaux became known to Apichatpong through French artists he met during a residency in Paris.⁴²¹ The support from Eric Chan, a Taiwanese factory owner, for *Blissfully Yours*, and *Syndromes and a Century* also showed this structure of bonding. Chan owned the factory where Apichatpong used as a shooting location for *Blissfully Yours*. He was someone who loved arts and music and supported artists sometimes. *Blissfully Yours* was submitted to Cannes International Film Festival by one of his French friends during his residency in Paris, otherwise he might not have an opportunity to try with the festival.⁴²² Apichatpong accepted this kind of connection as an important aspect of his filmmaking career, irrespective of whether it happened in Thailand or elsewhere.⁴²³ This kind of

⁴¹⁷ The Thai film industry had long been mobilized by independent filmmakers before the establishment of official studios like Sahamongkol Film and Five Star Productions in the 1970s. Nevertheless, these two studios tended to greenlight more projects without creative interference.

⁴¹⁸ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.200.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.201.

⁴²⁰ Apichatpong Weeratsethakul, 'Introduction to the Film by its Director', *Blissfully Yours* (Sud sanaeha), dir. by Apichatpong Weerasethakul (London: Second Run, 2006) [on DVD].

⁴²¹ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, pp.204-5.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p.207.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, p.205.

relationship is conceptualized by Wikanda Phromkhuntong as ‘emotional capital,’⁴²⁴ which she develops from Bourdieu’s discussion of the forms of capital that underpin social relations. Emotional capital, in her words, is found among Apichatpong’s supporters, ranging from the IFFR to the filmmaker’s artist friends, in many forms, from verbal and non-verbal recommendations of his works by other filmmakers, to the financial assistance in filmmaking. In this way, the director and his films have been continually maintained in the public.

Bourdieu’s notion of affective expression and connection between people has been interrogated by numerous theorists, either in terms of ‘social capital,’ or ‘cultural capital,’ or even ‘emotional capital. Bourdieu himself never refers explicitly to the concept of emotional capital in his theory of social capital,⁴²⁵ but it has been taken up by his followers. Helga Nowotny defines the term emotional capital as a variant of social capital, which can be accumulated according to the length of time and can have some dominance in other forms of capital. But he suggested to use it in the private rather than the public sphere.⁴²⁶ Marci D. Cottingham prefers to look at it as a form of cultural capital that incorporates ‘emotion-specific, trans-situational resources that individuals activate and embody in distinct fields.’⁴²⁷ For Zembylas, this concept of emotional capital should be integrated with many other ‘resources’ such as politics, culture, and society – covered by Bourdieu’s other forms of capital. By doing so, emotional capital can ‘blend with them to facilitate or prevent certain practices and discourses.’⁴²⁸

This kind of social relationship is apparent in Apichatpong’s works, especially during his formative years when he had little negotiating power over industry players. The interrelationship between directors and other stakeholders is not unique only to Apichatpong, but is experienced by many other film directors, even in Europe. Norbert Morawetz and others categorize modes of cross-border co-production into three emotional typologies, consisting of “true love”, “marriage of

⁴²⁴ Wikanda Phromkhuntong, p.91.

⁴²⁵ Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Emotional Capital and Education: Theoretical Infigths from Bourdieu’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55:4 (2007), 443-463 (p.450) <DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00390.x> [accessed 20 November 2021].

⁴²⁶ Helga Nowotny, ‘Women in Public Life in Austria’, in *Access to Power: Cross-National Studies of Women and Elites*, ed. by Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and Rose Laub Coser, 1st ed (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.147-156 (p.148).

⁴²⁷ Marci D. Cottingham, ‘Theorizing Emotional Capital’, *Theory and Society*, 45.5 (2016), 451-470 (p.451) <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44981841>> [accessed 30 May 2022].

⁴²⁸ Zembylas, p.457.

convenience”, and “arranged marriage.”⁴²⁹ Apichatpong’s co-production scheme tends to fit into the “true love” category, in which creativity is prioritized and made possible by multiple collaborations in several countries. In “marriage of convenience” co-productions, the accumulation of finance from different countries is seen to be the key focus, rather than creativity. “Arranged marriage” means that the co-production is constructed to chase international capital and tax credits.⁴³⁰ Each category is distinguished from the others by its relative budget – the first two tend to be small, but the third involves medium or high amounts of capital. Petr Szczepanik views the term “true love” as the most “natural” characteristic in co-production, involving ‘a cultural affinity between the minority co-producer and the director’s style or the story material.’⁴³¹ Normally, in this kind of co-production, the “true love” co-producers are given a chance to be involved in the earlier stages of the production process. And an attractive director with an interesting track record is demanded. However, as Apichatpong is the producer for his movies himself, the creative part is not interfered by any of his team of producers. In consequence, it can be argued that Apichatpong has the same status as the ‘true love producer,’ involving his internationally funded projects.

However, emotional/social capital alone could not enable Apichatpong to thrive in the art cinema industry, especially when the director encountered the complex network of ‘variegated film industries’ after he received his first Cannes prize in 2002 for *Blissfully Yours*. Since his third project *Tropical Malady*, he tried to find a way into European film financing structures by proposing it at one of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam’s events, the CineMart, where filmmakers pitch projects to potential investors. With a few collaborators from established organizations like the Centre National du Cinéma’s Fonds Sud Cinema, most of his transitional financial contributors were small-scale production companies or funding bodies that had just been established at the turn of the century. They blossomed because they saw the opportunity to recoup costs by reaching international audiences created by the expansion of the global market.⁴³² Their collaborations can be typified as ‘minority co-productions,’ referring to companies whose producers contribute the smallest proportion of financing and make the least contribution to the creative elements.⁴³³ This

⁴²⁹ Norbert Morawetz, and others, ‘Finance, Policy and Industrial Dynamics: The Rise of Co-productions in the Film Industry’, *Industry and Innovation*, 14.4 (2007), 421-443 (p.426)
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/13662710701524072>> [accessed 14 January 2021]. Emphasis original.

⁴³⁰ Pen-ek’s pan-Asian projects might be more corresponding to this definition.

⁴³¹ Petr Szczepanik, ‘Breaking through the East-European Ceiling: Minority Co-production and the New Symbolic Economy of Small Market Cinema’, in *European Film and Television Co-production: Policy and Practice* (see above at n.414), pp.163-4.

⁴³² De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, p.46.

⁴³³ Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall, p.13.

kind of arrangement enables financial risks to be distributed among multiple partners and public institutions.

Starting with capital from Charles de Meaux's Anna Sanders Films, the production funds for *Tropical Malady* were then doubled by state and film industry contributors. The film producers varied from the German agency Hessen Invest Film and the production company Thoke + Moebius Film to the French distributor Backup Films. Hessen Invest Film was a film funding program that was launched in 2001 by the state government of Hessen,⁴³⁴ while Thoke + Moebius Film was founded in 2002 and co-produced numerous prize-winning films such as Bruno Dumont's *Twentynine Palms* (2003) and Nguyễn Võ Nghiêm Minh's *Buffalo Boys* (2004).⁴³⁵ Backup Films – a division of Backup Media Group launched in 2002 – is a leading film financier in Europe, focusing on cross-border co-productions.⁴³⁶ Four out of ten sources of production finance for *Tropical Malady* – Downtown Pictures, Fondazione Montecinemaverità, Fabrica Cinema, and RAI Cinema⁴³⁷ - were in some way connected to Marco Mueller, who co-produced the film under his new company Downtown Pictures,⁴³⁸ of which he was president between 2002 and 2004.⁴³⁹ Fondazione Montecinemaverità was founded by him as a Bern-based funding body that was supported by the Lugano-based United Colours Communication and the Bern Directorate of Development and Cooperation.⁴⁴⁰ Mueller was also involved as the director of the film training and production department of Italy's Fabrica Cinema, which was supported by the Benetton group's research centre on communication.⁴⁴¹ He also used to work for the state television operator RAI Cinema during the 1980s, which not

⁴³⁴ The company has changed its name to Hessen Film and Media in 2016. Source: Hessen Film und Medien, 'Die Geschichte der Filmförderung in Hessen'. *Hessen Film und Medien*, [n.d.] <<https://www.hessenfilm.de/hessenfilm-und-medien/die-geschichte-der-filmfoerderung-in-hessen.html>> [accessed 14 January 2021].

⁴³⁵ UniFrance Film, 'Thoke Moebius Film Company', *UniFrance Film*, [n.d.] <<https://en.unifrance.org/directories/company/323212/thoke-moebius-filmcompany>> [accessed 8 June 2021].

⁴³⁶ Backup Media, *Backup Media*, [n.d.] <<http://www.backupmediagroup.com/v2.0/index.php?page=accueil&lang=uk>> [accessed 8 June 2021].

⁴³⁷ From the movie's credit list.

⁴³⁸ Kick The Machine, 'Tropical Malady', *Kick the Machine*, [n.d.] <<http://www.kickthemachine.com/page80/page24/page25/index.html>> [accessed 29 December 2022].

⁴³⁹ 'Marco Mueller Biography', in *IMDB* <<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0612191/bio>> [accessed 17 February 2021]. Para.9 of 16.

⁴⁴⁰ Fondazione Montecinemaverità was closed down in 2004. Source: Paolo Pettinati, 'Fondazione Monte Cinema Verità rischia la chiusura', *Tio 20 minute*, 9 August 2004 <<https://www.tio.ch/ticino/177508/fondazione-monte-cinema-verita-rischia-la-chiusura>> [accessed 14 January 2021].

⁴⁴¹ 'Marco Mueller Biography', para.8 of 16.

surprisingly became another partner on *Tropical Malady*.⁴⁴² It is the multifaceted support of Mueller that allows one to argue that emotional/social capital played a substantial role in financing Apichatpong's early work.

However, when one decides to support any particular person in the film industry, there might be some other reasons beyond the emotional or social relationship – other mutual advantages that each stakeholder may gain from each collaboration. There is often a risk that this kind of bonding might result in negative outcomes such as a collaborator trying to exercise control over the director's craftsmanship, exemplifying in the editing process of *Tropical Malady*. According to that film's editor, Lee Chatametikool, the Italian co-producer also wanted his editor to be involved in the process, which caused some friction at the beginning of the process, until an understanding was reached.⁴⁴³

Wikanda is preoccupied with the positive dimensions of emotional capital, and ignores the downsides: as Michalinos Zembylas puts it – using education as the ground of analysis – not all emotions will be allowed to enter a zone that is constructed by emotion norms. Some emotions can also be 'obeyed' or 'broken,' at varying cost.⁴⁴⁴ The opposite outcome such as the emotional capital of hatred can also occur. Wikanda also ignores the diversity of emotional capital that arises from different social and political discourses. Some important factors, such as power relations, are omitted. The encounter between the two potential editors of *Tropical Malady* is just one example that shows the complexity of the concept of emotional capital that Wikanda uses to study the funding model of Apichatpong's films.

It is here that I would like to relate Anna Jäckel's variegated film industries model to Apichatpong's co-productions. Although Jäckel does not define the term exactly, it can be understood as the European film financing model that is constituted of several sources, from pan-European, national and regional public funding institutions and small-scale production companies.⁴⁴⁵ The 'variegated film industries' surrounding Apichatpong's works are more complex, integrating both film agencies

⁴⁴² Ibid., para.3 of 16.

⁴⁴³ Sonthaya Subyen, *Sat Vikarn: Phap Ruang Saeng Khong Apichatpong Weerasethakul / Unknown Forces: The Illuminated Arts of Apichatpong Weerasethakul* (Bangkok: Openbooks, 2007), p.196.

⁴⁴⁴ Michalinos Zembylas, *Teaching with Emotion: A Postmodern Enactment* (Greenwich, CT, Information Age Publishing, 2005), cited in Michalinos Zembylas, 'Emotional Capital and Education Theoretical Insights from Bourdieu', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 55.4 (2007), 443-463 (p.447) <DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8527.2007.00390.x> [20 November 2021].

⁴⁴⁵ Jorge, p.65.

and visual culture organizations, as well as expanding beyond the European territory to other continents. In general, the average budget of Apichatpong's films is around 800,000 euros,⁴⁴⁶ most of which has come from western sources since there is more solid support there for contemporary culture. In Thailand, according to the director, when you say 'culture,' people think of temples, or dance, or handicrafts.⁴⁴⁷ Much of the money comes from non-profit organizations and from sales company that do not invest much in the first place and recoup the money from rentals in other countries.⁴⁴⁸ Since *Tropical Malady*, each project has comprised between seven and twelve local, national and international agencies including film funds, production companies, distributors, broadcasters, and visual arts organizations. *Memoria* was backed by twenty-nine organizations and companies from fourteen countries, covering Thailand, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Qatar, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK, US, Colombia and Mexico.

Although subsidy policy has shifted in the past decade in many countries from support on cultural grounds to subsidizing industries such as film on the grounds of economic growth and job creation,⁴⁴⁹ the kinds of film funds that have supported Apichatpong – whose remits are more on the cultural side – are still abundant and diverse. In the beginning, most of the funds came from Europe and Thailand, ranging from regional governments such as Germany's Hessen Invest Film (for *Tropical Malady*) or the City of Vienna Department for Cultural Affairs (for *Syndromes and a Century*).⁴⁵⁰ In terms of national bodies, France's Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC)⁴⁵¹ has regularly supported his features since he received his first Cannes award in 2002 – firstly via the Fonds Sud Cinema and later through L'Aide aux cinémas du monde (ACM). Other funds contributed to Apichatpong's projects only on a temporary basis, such as the Norwegian South Film

⁴⁴⁶ This figure is calculated from the budget of *Tropical Malady* which cost around one million US dollars, and *Syndromes and a Century* for 800,000 euros. Baumgärtel, p.188

⁴⁴⁷ Holger Römers, 'Creating His Own Cinematic Language: An Interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul', *Cineaste*, 30.4 (2005), 42-47 (p.46).

⁴⁴⁸ Baumgärtel, p.189.

⁴⁴⁹ Norbert Morawetz, 'The Rise of Co-productions in the Film Industry: The Impact of Policy Change and Financial Dynamics on Industrial Organization in a High Risk Environment' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2008), p.12.

⁴⁵⁰ Under the New Crowned Hope Festival to commemorate the 250th birthday of Mozart, the program supported six projects, consisting of Iran's Bahman Ghobadi, Chad's Mahamat-Saleh Haroun, Taiwan and Malaysia's Tsai Ming-liang, Indonesia's Garin Nugroho, Thailand's Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Paraguay's Paz Encina. Source: Geoffrey Macnab, G. (2009) 'Keith Griffiths & Simon Field – Nurturing Creativity', *Screen International*, 20 March 2009. <<https://www.screendaily.com/keith-griffiths-and-simon-field-nurturing-creativity/4043703.article>> [accessed 6 January 2021] (para.4 of 10).

⁴⁵¹ In English, it is called the National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image.

Fund Sørfond.⁴⁵² Film festival support was somewhat irregular, with the International Film Festival of Rotterdam (IFFR)'s Hubert Bals Fund providing money three times, but the Berlin International Film Festival's World Cinema Fund only once. Several private foundations have backed Apichatpong's productions, such as Switzerland's Fondazione Montecinemaverità, and Italy's Fabbrica Cinema. On the part of Thailand, aside the temporary collaborations with Grammy Entertainment's affiliates (through GMM Pictures, RAI Pictures and TIFA), and the mysterious Eric Chan, the Ministry of Culture gave a large one-off grant (around 8 million Baht, equivalent to £200,000) for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau point out that in the European production system, 'national cultural policy' and 'public broadcasting' came to play major roles in supporting film industries.⁴⁵³ As a result, another important co-sponsor of Apichatpong's projects – from the perspective of Jäckel's 'variegated film industries' model – is global television, such as the participation of Franco-German ZDF/Arte since *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*. Since the early 1990s, television networks and independent film companies have enhanced the number of national productions and international co-productions in Western Europe, often backed by European transnational subsidies.⁴⁵⁴ This has been possible because of legal requirements in some countries⁴⁵⁵ and the television networks' need for programming content.⁴⁵⁶ Furthermore, projects that have already been approved by state-backed institutions like the CNC or the World Cinema Fund – including those of Apichatpong – are effectively pre-approved as suitable for local broadcasters' programming.⁴⁵⁷ Normally, these European television companies use film festivals as the platform where they can sell their products or acquire rights to auteur films to be broadcast under the rubric of "world cinema" or "new (country/continent) wave".⁴⁵⁸ However, the characteristics of television networks' participation vary between countries and companies. Usually, they can choose to support film productions into three ways – co-production, pre-sales, or

⁴⁵² Norwegian South Film Fund, 'About the Festival', *Norwegian South Film Fund*, [n.d.] <<http://sorfond.no/about>> [accessed 1 June 2022].

⁴⁵³ Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau, 'Introduction', in *Behind the Screen: Inside European Production Cultures*, ed. by Petr Szczepanik and Patrick Vonderau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 1-9 (p.5) [accessed 19 November 2021]. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴⁵⁴ Maule, p.41.

⁴⁵⁵ Jäckel, p.55.

⁴⁵⁶ Naficy, p.44.

⁴⁵⁷ Hammett-Jamart, p.50.

⁴⁵⁸ Elsaesser, *European Cinema*, p.92.

acquisition of rights⁴⁵⁹ – which was not clear in Apichatpong's case. Some of them also collaborate with film festivals, such as Arte, which gave cash prizes of 10,000 Euros to films selected by the International Film Festival of Rotterdam's CineMart.

Rosanna Maule discusses the revitalization of auteur films by these national initiatives – the governments, state broadcasters, and national television networks in the international market – in terms of the 'response of Hollywood' and its 'entrance in the art house circuit of film distribution.'⁴⁶⁰ Since the mid-1990s, auteur films have been created and circulated through more diversified modes of film production and distribution, and have re-established the relationship with private forms of financing and freelance film production companies, slowly recuperating from a long phase of economic depression. In consequence, there are many reasons for European agencies to support Apichatpong's work. These include the establishment of cultural promotional programs in the 1990s by the Council of Europe, which I explain in more detail in Chapter 4. Secondly, international co-production has also risen since the mid-2000s,⁴⁶¹ due to the emergence of the neoliberal mode of finance – i.e., countries that have little state funding support now seek help from other countries, normally in terms of co-productions and funding schemes for filmmakers around the globe.⁴⁶² It is not only high-budget productions that follow this path, but also low-budget and independent productions.⁴⁶³ Public funding schemes managed by national and local governments in several countries have also proliferated. This has ushered in 'a whole set of supranational funding mechanisms, developed a transnational orientation for audio-visual production, expanding dramatically the popular orientation, and bolstering pan-European structures of synergistic cooperation.'⁴⁶⁴ The fact that Apichatpong has been recognized at the

⁴⁵⁹ Jäckel, p.55.

⁴⁶⁰ Maule, p.40-41.

⁴⁶¹ See more details. Allen J. Scott, 'A New Map of Hollywood: The Production and Distribution of American Motion Pictures', *Regional Studies*, 36:9 (2002), 957-975; Norbert Morawetz, and others, 'Finance, Policy and Industrial Dynamics: The Rise of Co-productions in the Film Industry', *Industry and Innovation*, 14.4 (2007), pp. 421-443; Mark Lorenzen, 'Internationalization vs. Globalization of the Film Industry', *Industry and Innovation*, 14:4 (2007), Michael Hoyler and Allan Watson, 'Framing City Networks through Temporary Projects: (Trans)national Film Production Beyond 'Global Hollywood'', *Urban Studies*, 56.5 (2019), 943-959.

⁴⁶² Tamara L. Falicov, 'The "Festival film": Film Festival Funds as Cultural Intermediaries', in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*, ed. by Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp.209-229 (p.211).

⁴⁶³ Benedict Goldsmith and Tom O'Regan, 'International Film Production: Interests and Motivations', *Cross-Border Cultural Production: Economic Runaway or Globalization?*, ed. by Janet Wasko and Mary Erickson (US: Cambria Press, 2008), pp.13-44 (p.15).

⁴⁶⁴ Random Halle, 'Offering Tales They Want to Hear: Transnational European Film Funding as Neo-Orientalism', in *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (see above at n.29), pp.303-319.

most prestigious international film festivals, like Cannes, reinforces his access to such funding sources, and in turn, as I will argue in the next section, it strengthens Europe's role in world and auteur cinema.

3.2 Europe as the 'auteur of world cinema'

Europe has long developed its policies and activities to strengthen its role as the leader of 'world cinema' – a term that has long been explored in a variety of dimensions and often criticized for its problematic meaning. Borrowing Elsaesser's discussion of world cinema as a category,⁴⁶⁵ Deborah Shaw examines world cinema in relation to distribution and exhibition. She finds that it is closely associated with film festivals, European funding agencies, and 'non-English language art cinema circuits.'⁴⁶⁶ Joseph Pomp has also noted that France's policy of continued support for art cinema serves its objective of maintaining its role as 'the author of world cinema.'⁴⁶⁷ Pomp further suggests that these practices have taken place throughout the history of French cinema – in fact, since the birth of cinema. Unlike popular culture, such as America's, that has tended to be focused on genres such as comedy, melodrama, or fantasy, France has offered images of the world that reflect the diversity of cultures. According to Pierre-Emmanuel Lecerf, head of international affairs at CNC, France wants 'to keep its central position as a development and research centre for world cinema'.⁴⁶⁸ We can see this phenomenon at all stages of filmmaking, from training to funding and exhibition. Through its *Résidence* programme, the Cannes International Film Festival gives grant for young filmmakers to stay in Paris and develop their scripts, on the assumption that this gives them the chance to locate themselves at 'the heart of world art cinema.'⁴⁶⁹ Such filmmakers can be further educated through production programmes like the Nantes-based Festival des 3 Continents' *Produire Au Sud* (PAS) workshop, which offers them both access to financial resources and an induction into the 'rites of passages' that will enable them to exploit film festival circuits and

⁴⁶⁵ Deborah Shaw, 'European Co-production Funds and Latin American Cinema: Process of Othering and Bourgeois Cinephilia in Claudia Llosa's *La teta asustada*', *Diogenes*, 62.1 (2018), 88-99 (p.90) <DOI: 10.1177/10392192116667011> [accessed 26 Jan 2021].

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ Joseph Pomp, 'France as Author of World Cinema: International Co-production and the Fonds Sud, 1984-2012', *French Cultural Studies*, 3.2 (2020), 111-123 (pp.111-2) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957155820910858>> [accessed 10 February 2021].

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ Deborah Shaw, 'Sex, Texts and Money, Funding and Latin American Queer Cinema: The Cases of Martel's *La niña santa* and Puenzo's *XXY*', *Transnational Cinemas*, 4.2 (2013), 165-184 (p.167).

connect with the wider industry.⁴⁷⁰ Through the Aide aux cinémas du monde funds, art cinema must ‘pass through France to be conceptualized, manufactured, and stamped for approval to export.’⁴⁷¹ All in all, France is finally ‘the world reference for the production of Global Art Cinema.’⁴⁷²

This explains why the Cannes International Film Festival has regularly selected Apichatpong’s works to exhibit at its venues. France is known as the ‘home of the auteur theory’,⁴⁷³ and the festival reflects this mindset, giving priority to the ‘critically respectable auteurs who’ve been there before.’ Not only has the festival awarded four prizes to Apichatpong – the Un Certain Regard in 2002 for *Blissfully Yours*, the Special Jury in 2004 for *Tropical Malady*, the Palme d’Or in 2010 for *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, and the Special Jury Prize in 2021 for *Memoria* – but Cannes has consistently enshrined Apichatpong into its space of prestige, in the same way as the International Film Festival of Rotterdam has done to Anocha Suwichakornpong (see Chapter 4). During his first invitation to Cannes in 2002, *Blissfully Yours* was at first scheduled in a minor programming slot where the only screenings were offered in the 1,000-seat Théâtre Claude Debussy and the 300-seat Salle Bazin. Usually this happens with films in Un Certain Regard that are thought to have a limited audience. Furthermore, the first screening was scheduled on the first afternoon, when a lot of press and festival-goers had not yet arrived the event. As a result, the film had quite a limited exposure to festivalgoers until it received positive reviews from the French press, and then an extra screening was added in the middle of the festival.

Since then, Apichatpong has consistently received honours from the festival in many other ways. He became a regular guest at the festival between 2002 and 2010, when he started to build up his reputation at the global level. In addition to the selection of his films in 2002, 2004, 2010 and 2021, he visited Cannes in 2006 when his project *Utopia* was chosen as one of the Atelier selections eligible to be pitched to potential investors. Two years later, he was invited as a member of the jury headed by Sean Penn. Since his Palme d’Or achievement, all his subsequent works have been invited to the festival. In 2012, his 60-min film *Mekong Hotel* – a portrait of a hotel and its vampire guests – was selected in the Special Screening section. *Cemetery of Splendour* – about a volunteer

⁴⁷⁰ Ana Vinuela, ‘Exporting the French Co-Production Model: Aide aux cinémas du monde and Produire au Sud’ in *European Film and Television Co-production: Policy and Practice* (see above at n.414), pp.223-239 (p.233).

⁴⁷¹ Pomp, p.112.

⁴⁷² Vinuela, p.235.

⁴⁷³ Luzy Mazdon, ‘The Cannes Film Festival as Transnational Space’, *Post Script*, 25.2 (2006), 19-30, p.22.

woman who helps take care of a soldier suffering from sleeping sickness – was shown in *Un Certain Regard* in 2015, and an omnibus project about Thai politics, *Ten Years Thailand*, the final segment of which was directed by Apichatpong, was selected as a 2018 Special Screening. The Cannes International Film Festival has given privileged status to Apichatpong and consecrated him through what Barrett Hodsdon⁴⁷⁴ calls 'the process of enshrinement' into 'the sanctity of the film d'auteur.' Tracing this back to the film festivals of the 1960s, Hodsdon insists the same process continues to be mobilized in contemporary film festival culture, with the repetitions of such activities as 'auteur privileging and placement,' 'unearthing new auteurs and paying tribute to past masters or neglected auteurs,' and 'showcasing overlooked or emerging national cinema.' Apichatpong has passed through all elements of the 'process of enshrinement' and has become 'a protected species within the closure' of the Cannes International Film Festival so that 'his stature remains high within this informed cultural enclave.' We can see this process taking place throughout the last two decades since Apichatpong's invitation to Cannes in 2002, interrupted only at the time of *Syndromes and a Century*, his only work in this period that premiered outside the Cannes space.

Enshrining talent in this way enables Cannes to solidify its brand name as the gatekeeper of global art cinema and maintain its status as what De Valck calls an 'alternative cinema network.'⁴⁷⁵ Using Bruno Latour's Actor-Network theory (ANT), De Valck explores the Cannes International Film Festival as a set of relations surrounding or within an object of study, instead of concentrating on the overall structures of the object itself. This set of relations is scrutinized by considering the network as 'a relation to living and non-living actors,' all of which are interdependent. Within these relations, various entities are produced through the movements and interactions between continually circulating entities. The network is then seen as 'a continuous circulating process that prevent stable definitions'.⁴⁷⁶ Encapsulating the Cannes International Film Festival as 'alternative', De Valck sees that this network proceeds through numerous 'mobile agencies,' ranging from Hollywood to avant-garde circles. In other words, the event is made up by all of the 'necessary links' (emphasis in original) that circulate through the 'congregations, performances, and products'⁴⁷⁷ activated by such film festival actors as filmmakers, critics, and sales agents. Such a relational approach between actors at the festival explains why Cannes offers so many opportunities to shape the 'alternative cinema network' during and beyond the festival time. Alongside the festival, the

⁴⁷⁴ Hodsdon, pp.272-273.

⁴⁷⁵ Marije de Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), p.101 <<https://doi.org/10.5117/9789053561928>> [accessed 5 April 2021].

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., p.34.

Cannes Film Market (Marché du Film) has long been known as a meeting place for the 'independent sector of the increasingly globalised film industry,'⁴⁷⁸ and 'a matchmaker between talent and money,' where various ongoing activities are conducted at different stages of the development of a film.⁴⁷⁹ These opportunities can be categorized into forms of networking, distribution, and exhibition – all of which promote specific directors as auteurs. Cannes has clearly offered these parallel supports to Apichatpong since the entry of *Tropical Malady* into official competition in 2004. During its official premiere, the film was introduced many times by the host as the first Thai film ever in Cannes competition: 'It's very important for films like this to come to a festival like Cannes. It is an opportunity to become known, to be bought, to be distributed, to be seen, and of course perhaps to win a prize.'⁴⁸⁰ In such a remark, Apichatpong is seen not only as an auteur, but also as a new symbol of an alternative business network that needs to be highlighted and maintained by the festival.

De Valck's application of ANT theory, however, tends to concentrate only on the exhibition and distribution side of the alternative 'performances' within the Cannes International Film Festival discourse, but leaves the financing aspect untouched. Furthermore, despite the rejection of the study of film festivals as an institution category, her main focus still centres on activities during the festival itself. But if we shift the same ANT theory to explore Apichatpong's financing model, the network will be seen to be more complex, integrating with both living actors – such as related film festivals, co-production funds, production companies – and non-living actors such as emotional capital. Generally speaking, unlike many other events, the festival itself does not provide any production funds; instead, it offers the prestige of the Cannes brand and the endorsement of global art cinema. I adapt this latter phrase from Falicov's term 'endorsement of quality,'⁴⁸¹ which is comparable to Bourdieu's 'symbolic capital.'⁴⁸² According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital 'is represented symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, that presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive

⁴⁷⁸ Dorota Ostrowska, 'International Film Festivals as Producers of World Cinema', *Cinéma & Cie*, 10:14-15 (2010), 145-150 (p.148).

⁴⁷⁹ Dorota Ostrowska, 'Making Film History at the Cannes Film Festival', in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (see above at n.462), pp.18-33.

⁴⁸⁰ Cannes International Film Festival, 'The Steps: Sud Pralad', *Cannes International Film Festival*, 15 May 2004 <<https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/films/sud-pralad#vid=10015>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

⁴⁸¹ Falicov, *The Festival Film*, p.209.

⁴⁸² Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital*, p.255.

capacity.’ Such symbolic capital can be gained easily from film festivals that act as ‘gatekeepers’⁴⁸³ who recognize a film and show it to the public, and as ‘tastemakers’ who tries a hand on some films for the audience.⁴⁸⁴ In this way, the symbolic capital given by Cannes International Film Festival generates ‘economic profits’⁴⁸⁵ to films and directors.

This process is referred to by Bourdieu as ‘consecration,’ a process in which film festivals play a significant role in endorsing both films and filmmakers. In Apichatpong’s case, if viewed through Latour’s ANT theory, the consecration – the certification of an agent as an author of world cinema – is not driven only by French actors, but also by many other actors in Europe, most of whom are involved in funding or co-producing his works. As he has gained more recognition, Apichatpong has accepted that it might become more difficult to apply for funds that are intended for younger filmmakers.⁴⁸⁶ But his films have continued to be supported by several festivals, including the Berlin International Film Festival and the International Film Festival of Rotterdam. The World Cinema Fund awarded *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* a 60,000 Euro production grant and a 10,000 Euro distribution grant in 2008 and 2011 respectively, and *Cemetery of Splendour* received 30,000 Euro grants for both production and distribution in 2014 and 2015. Neither film was ever screened at the Berlin International Film Festival. In the case of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, three of Apichatpong’s films – *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, *Cemetery of Splendour*, and *Memoria* – won Hubert Bals Fund Script and Project Development Support grants, in 2008, 2013, and 2018 respectively. But only *Cemetery of Splendour* was screened at the festival. All these supporters are attached to national bodies, in the same way as the CNC. The WCF is an initiative of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, the Berlin International Film Festival, the German Federal Foreign Office, and the Goethe-Institut, and also has partnership projects with the European Union’s Creative Europe MEDIA programme. Similarly, the HBF’s partners include Nederland Film Fonds, Creative Europe Media, Tiger Film Mecenaat, Netherlands Post Production Alliances, and van Beek-Donner Stichting. Both want to position their respective nations I argue, as one of the authors of world cinema. The WCF in particular requires a German company to co-participate in any funding application, which helps certify Germany’s leading role in the production

⁴⁸³ Marijke de Valck, ‘Fostering Art, Adding Value, Cultivating Taste: Film Festivals as Sites of Cultural Legitimization’, in *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (see above at n.462), pp.100-116.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.142.

⁴⁸⁶ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.213.

of art cinema. Similarly, the HBF aims to maintain the perception of Rotterdam as a festival focused on the three As – art, avant-garde, and auteurs.⁴⁸⁷

Tamara L Falicov suggests that this practice can produce ‘a snowball effect’⁴⁸⁸ where a filmmaker may find that receipt of one grant leads to receipt of another. This appears to have happened to many contemporary global art cinema-makers who have tapped into multiple funds for the same project, although few of them can fulfil the same level of success as Apichatpong. The scope of this ‘snowball effect,’ I argue, varies according to surrounding factors such as types of funds, characteristics of funding agencies, and a director’s social, cultural and symbolic capital. In the case of Apichatpong, his support comes from major film festivals like Cannes and Berlin, which give preference to established filmmakers. In contrast, Rotterdam has tended to prefer to support young and debut directors like Anocha Suwichakornpong, and this focus on less established talent might be one of the reasons why Anocha tends to work with mid-level festivals such as Rotterdam. However, in 2017, Rotterdam established a new type of fund called Voices: Script and Project Development that provides support to more established directors. As a result, Latour’s ANT theory is problematic here. Latour in general believes in the heterogeneity of actors in the network, which proceeds without hierarchy between the actors. Explained through Bourdieu’s concept of ‘consecration’⁴⁸⁹ in the field of restricted production – a framework that I argue describes the production of art cinema – a variety of agents are involved in the consecration process, ranging from the education system and academics to museums. The field of restricted production functions like a site of competition ‘for properly cultural consecration,’ and ‘for the power to grant it.’ As a result, a dynamic hierarchy of relations is established:

In a given space of time a hierarchy of relations is established between the different domains, the works and the agents having a varying amount of legitimizing authority. This hierarchy, which is in fact dynamic, expresses the structure of objective relations of symbolic force between the producers of symbolic goods who produce for either a restricted or an unrestricted public and are consequently consecrated by differentially legitimized and legitimizing institutions.

⁴⁸⁷ De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics*, p.165.

⁴⁸⁸ Tamira L Falicov, ‘Film Funding Opportunities for Latin American Filmmakers: A Case for Further North-South Collaboration in Training and Film festival Initiatives’, in *A Companion to Latin American Cinema*, ed. by Maria M. Delgado, Stephen M. Hart, and Randal Johnson (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp.85-98 (p.87) < <https://doi-org.soton.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/9781118557556.ch5> > [accessed 10 March 2021].

⁴⁸⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* [London (?): Polity Press, 1993], p.121.

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In consecrating Apichatpong in a field of restricted production like global art cinema, these film festivals manifest differing relationships, according to Bourdieu's concept. The Cannes International Film Festival is the only event that does not offer funding, but it remains the most influential agent in the field as it provides the most prestigious tool for the construction of symbolic capital. These include its prizes, the market of alternative cinema, and ultimately the global audience that media coverage of the festival produces. Most of Apichatpong's works premiered there, while the International Film Festival of Rotterdam has shown his shorts, features, and art installations. The Berlin International Film Festival participates in the field of cultural production as a funding agency. Despite the hierarchy of the festivals' roles in the field, all of them act as 'authoritative cultural gatekeepers for global art cinema,'⁴⁹⁰ by producing 'a system of reproduction of auteurs.'⁴⁹¹ In other words, film festivals are the key producers who define the criteria of global art cinema and auteurs, and find its audience at the end.

Taken from a broader perspective beyond the territories of some specific film festivals, these processes of cultural consecration that have been bestowed upon particular filmmakers from the Global South in the last two decades can be seen as part of the European strategy to position its continent as the auteur of world cinema. As will be discussed in chapter four, several European audio-visual policies have become key triggers in the development of cinema in the last decades through such supranational institutions as the Council of Europe, aiming at 'promoting cultural diversity'⁴⁹² and strengthening its role 'as a global promoter of diversity,' in both external and internal directions. A market is developed to support European cultural products alongside the 'outward looking, international dimension.' In this way, Europe becomes the key operator in defining the characteristics of the artistic field – global art cinema and those who produce it. As such, European power is strengthened to legitimate a view of global art cinema. Using literary works as examples, Bourdieu argues that the field of cultural production is a site of struggle between agents and institutions over the accumulation of power. In art cinema's field of cultural production, Europe constructs what Bourdieu calls 'the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products'.⁴⁹³ It is this exertion of power and control, especially over film knowledge, that enables

⁴⁹⁰ Marijke de Valck, 'Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the Economization of Culture', *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 23:1 (2014), 74-89 (p.83) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24411693> > [accessed 02 July 2021].

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁴⁹² Carmina Crusafon, 'The European Audiovisual Space: How European Media Policy Has Set the Pace of Its Development', in *European Cinema and Television: Cultural Policy and Everyday Life* (see above at n.414), pp.81-101 (p.93).

⁴⁹³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Production*, p.42.

film festivals in Europe to define what constitutes art in cinema,⁴⁹⁴ provoking debates over the neo-colonialist dimension of contemporary world culture.

Several attempts have also been made by European organizations to affect the balance of power between funding bodies and grant recipient countries. The WCF was one of the earliest organizations to declare the sharedness of cultural balance by stressing their 'aware[ness] of the local cultural/historical context, continually optimising and updating our knowledge, whilst not forgetting the film history of these regions and countries.'⁴⁹⁵ Owen Evans, however, advocates a notion of interim space between the film festivals and filmmakers in the Global South. He likens this space to Homi Bhaba's post-colonial concept of 'liminal space' or an 'operating point of locus,' where the colonizer will help the colonized to find their voice and assert their self-expression.⁴⁹⁶ In this position, the colonized will stand up with equality for a while alongside the colonizer so that they can compete with other powerful institutions – such as Hollywood – with equal status. Put simply, it is the competition between Hollywood and the art cinema circuits in which film festivals play an important role, through support programmes such as the World Cinema Fund.

European support has strongly influenced Apichatpong's filmmaking journeys in many respects – in terms of production, distribution and exhibition. However, if we look at his film financing in detail, we find that the director has used his own network to acquire funds. In this analysis, Bruno Latour's ANT theory can also help us explain the 'circulation' of Apichatpong's financing and producing network, which, I argue, is a complex paradigm of a 'democratic network.'

⁴⁹⁴ Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong, *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p.157. EBook Central eBook.

⁴⁹⁵ Vincent Bugno, 'World Cinema Fund', *Berlin International Film Festival*, n.d. < <https://www.berlinale.de/media/nrwd/bilder/2020/auslagerung/wcf-booklet-2020.pdf> > [accessed 17 October 2020].

⁴⁹⁶ Owen Evans, 'Border Exchanges: The Role of the European Film Festival', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 15.1 (2007), 23-33 (p.26) <doi: 10.1080/14782800701273318> [accessed 7 May 2021].

3.3 Apichatpong and the ‘democratic art’ network

Writing in 1986, Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper described a ‘dramatic transformation’ that had occurred in the previous three decades of the film industry, from a ‘factory-like production process’ to a ‘vertically disintegrated’ system of ‘cross-industry subcontracting.’⁴⁹⁷ Independent companies were directly involved with productions in which various activities were subcontracted to smaller firms. With the maturation of globalization, this ‘transactions-intensive’ entertainment industry⁴⁹⁸ has horizontally expanded through ‘(trans)national film project networks,’ driven by ‘a mechanism for managing resource interdependencies, within and across countries and national contexts’⁴⁹⁹ (emphasis original). This mechanism has also been the main characteristic of Apichatpong’s mode of financing and producing, especially for his last four movies, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, *Mekong Hotel*, *Cemetery of Splendour* and *Memoria*, where his financial dependence has been distributed to small and multifarious agencies. Apichatpong has often encountered difficulties in finding funds, even after he received his Palme d’Or, due to the limited audience for his works.⁵⁰⁰ His producers sometimes ask if his next film would be more accessible than his previous pictures,⁵⁰¹ but he insists that ‘the co-investors should love the projects, rather than profit expectation.’⁵⁰² In this period of adjustment, the former European-based ‘variegated film industries’ network has expanded horizontally into other continents, as well as across disciplines, culminating in the combination of the previous pan-European model with a form of ‘distributed financing’⁵⁰³ approach.

The notion of ‘distributed financing’ is suggested by Daren C. Brabham in his book *Crowdsourcing*.⁵⁰⁴ Brabham uses the terms to characterize ‘crowdfunding,’ referring to a method through which ‘an artist or an entrepreneur develops an idea and seeks monetary support to bring his or her idea to the market.’ It has become one of the key methods used by American independent filmmakers since the decline of DVD markets and the closure of several independent film affiliates

⁴⁹⁷ Susan Christopherson and Michael Storper, ‘The City as Studio; the World as Back Lot: The Impact of Vertical Disintegration on the Location of the Motion Picture Industry’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 4.3 (1986), 305-320 (p.305).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.313.

⁴⁹⁹ Hoyler and Watson, p.946.

⁵⁰⁰ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.210.

⁵⁰¹ Baumgärtel, p.181.

⁵⁰² Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.210.

⁵⁰³ Brabham, p.38.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

in the late 2000s.⁵⁰⁵ Although Apichatpong has yet to use online crowdfunding to raise money for his projects, his method could be described as a type of distributed financing. With each film he makes, the



Figure 3. 1 *Memoria* Thai poster with numerous sponsor logos

number of financial supporters increases: sixteen were organizations involved in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*,⁵⁰⁶ seventeen in *Cemetery of Splendour*,⁵⁰⁷ and twenty-nine in *Memoria*,⁵⁰⁸ all of whom are credited as production companies, co-production companies, ‘with the support of’, or ‘with the participation of.’ It is not clear what criteria determine the type of

⁵⁰⁵ Chuck Tryon, ‘Crowdfunding, Independence, Authorship’, in *A Companion to American Indie Film*, ed. by Geoff King (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), pp.433-451 (p.436). ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁵⁰⁶ The Match Factory, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, (English press kit, [n.p.]), (2010), last page.

⁵⁰⁷ The Match Factory, *Cemetery of Splendour*, ([n.p.]).

⁵⁰⁸ The Match Factory, ‘Memoria’, *Memoriathefilm.com*, [n.d.] <<https://memoriathefilm.com/>> [accessed 10 June 2022].

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credit for each organization, except that the production companies category includes only Apichatpong's *Kick the Machine* and Simon Field's *Illuminations Films (Past Lives)*, before a third, Colombo-based Burning S.A.S., joined them in *Memoria*. The 'with the participation of' group is limited to French bodies that support funds - L'Aide aux Cinémas du Monde Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée, Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international and Institut François. More stakeholders are listed under the 'with the support of' and 'co-production companies' categories, from governmental and private, cinema and cultural bodies, film institutes, non-government organizations, film festivals, to arts galleries and museums. Furthermore, members in each group do not necessarily play exactly the same role. For example, under the co-production category, the world sales agent The Match Factory is not only in charge of distribution but also allocates some funds for the production under the 'minimum guarantee', which will be deducted from the sales receipts.⁵⁰⁹ Thailand's 185 Films, on the other hand, is a small independent production company and normally depends on overseas funds for their works. They will not have the same kind of contractual agreement with Apichatpong as the Match Factory would. Similarly, some public funds are also needed to be returned,⁵¹⁰ while some others might give it free such as Bangkok-based Purin Pictures.⁵¹¹

Most of Apichatpong's network members are not regular supporters, except French-based Anna Sanders Films and Germany producer-cum-sales agent The Match Factory, partly due to the funding requirement for local commitment by Fonds Sud Cinema, Aide aux cinémas du monde, the Berlin International Film Festival's World Cinema Fund and the Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg Fund. Other familiar contributors include French broadcaster ZDF/arte and the Hubert Bals Fund. Interestingly, many of these organizations are philanthropic agencies that promote filmmaking with some specific objectives. Danny Glover's Louverture Films, for example, supports films that have 'historical relevance, social purpose, commercial value and artistic integrity,'⁵¹² while New York-based Field of Vision commissions innovative, artistic, and critical works through a cinematic lens.⁵¹³ In other words, Apichatpong's funding request falls into what it is called as 'fundraising' –

⁵⁰⁹ Ekkasat Sapphachang, 'Apichatpong Weerasethakul: Kabot Nang Thai' [Thai film rebel], *GM Magazine*, August 2010, 130-140 (p.137).

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹¹ Purin Pictures, 'Submissions', Purin Pictures <<https://www.purinpictures.org/submission>> [11 June 2022].

⁵¹² Louverture Films, 'About Us', *Louverture Films*, 2022 <<https://www.louverturefilms.com/about-us>> [11 June 2022].

⁵¹³ Field of Vision, 'About Field of Vision', *Field of Vision*, [n.d.] <<https://fieldofvision.org/about>> [11 June 2022].

which is usually made for a nonprofit organization through various methods, such as sponsorships, donations, or grants.⁵¹⁴ Even the director himself also calls his funding methods as ‘fundraising’⁵¹⁵ or nongovernment affiliated.⁵¹⁶

Since *Cemetery of Splendour*, the network of production partners has expanded to encompass Asia and Mexico, with new participants including Malaysia’s leading content and entertainment company Astro Show, South Korea’s Asia Culture Centre - Asian Arts Theatre, and Mexican production company Detalle Films. For *Memoria*, nine out of the twenty-nine stakeholders were from Europe and Britain, with eight from Asia, excluding Thailand. However, the number of countries of production were officially credited on the press materials to include only Colombia, Thailand, U.K., Mexico, France, Germany and Qatar, while the rest seven territories such as China, Hong Kong, Japan, and the U.S. were omitted.

With many distinctions between the members of the production network, the network may be better described as a set of relations, rather than organizations. To put it terms of Latour’s actor-network theory, each actor has its own ‘trail of associations’ between heterogeneous elements,⁵¹⁷ but the network has no small-scale or large-scale distinctions:

it has no a priori order relation; it is not tied to the axiological myth of a top and of a bottom of society; it makes absolutely no assumption whether a specific locus is macro- or micro- and does not modify the tools to study the element “a” or the element “b”.⁵¹⁸

Using ANT, we can see that Apichatpong’s network involves multiple actors who are distinct kinds of entities. Some of Apichatpong’s collaborators are large corporations, such as the Thai studio affiliate TIFA (Thai Independent Filmmakers Association), which served as a co-producer on *Tropical Malady* and *Syndromes and a Century*, or Malaysia’s large broadcaster Astro Shaw on *Cemetery of Splendour*. TIFA was a short-lived production company launched in 2004 by one of the major record

⁵¹⁴ Gilan Gertz, ‘Fundraising’, in *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, 2020 <<https://ed.p.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail>> [28 June 2022]

⁵¹⁵ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.211.

⁵¹⁶ Baumgärtel, p.189.

⁵¹⁷ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.5 <<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.32135>> [accessed 8 June 2022].

⁵¹⁸ Bruno Latour, ‘On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications, Plus More Than a Few Complications’, *Philosophical Literary Journal Logos*, 27.1 (January 2017), 173-197, p.5 <DOI:10.22394/0869-5377-2017-1-173-197> [10 June 2022].

studios, Grammy Entertainment, aimed at finding co-production partners outside Thailand.⁵¹⁹ Astro Shaw had produced numerous films for the local and regional market,⁵²⁰ and once looked to invest in quality foreign films, starting with *Cemetery of Splendour* and a number of other Asian art films.⁵²¹ Ran Ma points out that the Asian independent cinema or border-crossing films cannot be totally isolated from 'the mainstream commercial film industries and their industrial models and formulas,' which cause the realignment and diversity of independent cinema as 'a set of practice and discourse.'⁵²² In fact, the regional filmmaking collaboration between independent filmmakers in Southeast Asia themselves are few. So far only a few projects were implemented, such as a reflection of Chinese migrants in changing Asia in *Letters from the South* (2013) and the *Ten Year* franchise – omnibus films to explore social and political issues in Hong Kong, Thailand, Taiwan and Japan. It might be argued that the international collaborations between Apichatpong and several Chinese independent production companies in *Memoria* might constitute one of a few incidences in the independent circle that facilitate more collaborations within Asia. Furthermore, through the collaboration with fellow director Jia Zhang-ke, other China-based companies also joined the row, including the big streaming provider IQiui Pictures.

Latour understands the practices and relations between actors through a paradigm of 'association, translation, alliance, obligatory passage point,'⁵²³ even though he finds that this terminology is too limited to completely define the complex and diverse quantities of the actor network. It can be argued that this kind of network is Apichatpong's translation of all strategies and a sort of fundraising methods that he learnt from his school the Art Institute of Chicago, visual arts experiences, and European variegated film industries. Chuck Tryon proposes an interesting perspective on the American independents' success during the 1980s and 1990s – the same period when Apichatpong studied in Chicago - seeing it as 'not only the product of talent alone but also of networking and fundraising acumen.'⁵²⁴ Those practices are mobilized through the process of crowdfunding as well as the institutionalization and branding of American independent cinema in

⁵¹⁹ Römers, p.46.

⁵²⁰ Astro Show, 'About Astro Shaw SDN BHD', *Astro*, [n.d.] <<https://www.astroshaw.com.my/About>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

⁵²¹ Other Astro Shaw's foreign investment included Indonesia director Mouly Surya's *Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts*, which made its debut at the 2017 Director's Fortnight section in Cannes, and Hong Kong movie *The White Girl*, co-directed by Christopher Doyle and Jenny Suen.

⁵²² Ma, p.52.

⁵²³ Bruno Latour, 'On Recalling ANT', *The Sociological Review*, 47.1 (May 1999), 15–25 (p.20) <[doi:10.1111/j.1467-954X.1999.tb03480.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.1999.tb03480.x)> [accessed 8 June 2022].

⁵²⁴ Tryon, p.440.

the last two decades, and turns American independent film into what Yannis Tzioumakis calls ‘a democratic art.’⁵²⁵ Apichatpong himself accepted that the School provided a counselling centre for students to access the grant and residency lists, as well as grant writing strategies. Drawing on Andrew Stubbs’s definitions of the term ‘indie auteurism,’ or ‘indie’ film, it is ‘a discursive construct conveying authenticity, autonomy, artistry, natural talent, innovation and quality attached to authorial figure.’⁵²⁶ It is mobilized for economic purposes, and has an important role in the ‘creation, financing, development and production of content and, in turn, in the generation of cultural meaning.’

Applying Marijke De Valck’s argument about the film festival network and its ability to translate relations in different environments,⁵²⁷ it can be said that Apichatpong and his co-actors are able to form and sustain their network through processes of translation in fluctuating circumstances. The crossover between cinema and visual arts can be considered as one of Apichatpong’s translating methods in the construction of his network, inspired by several contexts surrounding the film industry and arts institutions at the turn of the century. Since the 1990s, an exchange between ‘the moving image and the white cube walls of galleries and museums’ began to take place.⁵²⁸ In general, this crossover can be seen in three ways – those visual artists moving into feature-length filmmaking; those adopting cinema forms for use in galleries; and those making works for both spaces, which would include Apichatpong.⁵²⁹

The mixing of visual arts is one of the interstitial characteristics in Apichatpong’s feature films. Aside from the film festival circuits where his works are shown, Apichatpong also exhibits gallery installations around the world. Trained as a filmmaker at the Art Institute of Chicago, he came to work in visual art almost by accident. Having limited money to make movies, he used video as a solution and was then approached by a curator friend, Gridthiya Gaweewong, who pioneered video-installation exhibitions in Thailand.⁵³⁰ As a result, Apichatpong’s features always incorporate

⁵²⁵ Tzioumakis, p.251.

⁵²⁶ Andrew Stubbs, ‘Managing Indie-auteurism in an Era of Sectoral Media Convergence’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Edge Hill University, 2019), p.1.

⁵²⁷ De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics*, p.102.

⁵²⁸ Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), pp. 9–26 (p.12), *JSTOR* <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kdsq.4>> [accessed 12 Jun 2022].

⁵²⁹ Nace Zavrl, ‘High Art Cinema: The Artist’s Feature Film’, *MIRAJ, Moving Image Review & Art Journal*, 7.1, 53-64 (pp.53-55) <[10.1386/miraj.7.1.52_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/miraj.7.1.52_1)> [10 June 2022].

⁵³⁰ Lawrence Chua, ‘Apichatpong Weerasethakul’, *Bomb Magazine*, 114 (1 January 2011) <<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/apichatpong-weerasethakul-1/>> [accessed 3 January 2020] (para. 16 of 58).

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elements of visual art. According to Kim Jihoon, Apichatpong redefines cinema by allowing it to be 'mutated through redistributing its properties'⁵³¹ into other forms of visual art. He creates 'cinematic' video installations, and also employs new aesthetic forms and techniques that originated in the video installation medium back to filmmaking. He also studied architecture in Thailand prior to his time in Chicago, and this background has influenced him to adopt two 'cinematic' tendencies of video art into his filmmaking: 'deepened durational space,' or long takes; and the 'spatialized form of broken narratives.' Kim Jihoon is not the only scholar who has identified these connections. *Screen International* critic Allan Hunter suggests that some of the scenes in *Cemetery of Splendour*, such as the scene of glowing electric lights used for the experimental treatment of soldiers with sleeping sickness, can be compared to an art gallery installation.⁵³²

In consequence, some of the most prominent members of his network are based in visual art. His long-time co-producer Paris-based Anna Sanders Films is not a common production company in the film industrial sense but is more identified with visual art. Instead of focusing on movies for theatrical release, the company aims to support a new breed of cinema – one that is made by visual artists and shown mostly in galleries and at film festivals.⁵³³ Several members of its executive team are also active visual artists themselves. His long-time supporter Simon Field, who has officially produced his works since 2006, insists that the reason for setting up his company Illuminations Films was that, 'we are very interested in exploring this terrain between the art world and the film world.'⁵³⁴ This visual arts network had multiplied by the time Apichatpong made *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, on which Munich's Haus der Kunst, Liverpool's Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT), and London's Animate Projects also collaborated. In *Cemetery of Splendour*, the Gwangju-based Asian Arts Theatre, which specializes in performance arts, also offered him funding with the condition that the director also produce a piece of performing art for the theatre.⁵³⁵ In *Memoria*, several public and private visual arts agencies were involved – from the

⁵³¹ Kim Jihoon, p.138.

⁵³² Allan Hunter, 'Cemetery of Splendour Review', *Screen International*, 18 May 2015
<<https://www.screendaily.com/reviews/cemetery-of-splendour/5087447.article>> [accessed 17 February 2021] (para. 6 of 7).

⁵³³ 'Anna Sanders Films – The In-Between', *les presses du réel*
<<https://www.lespressesdureel.com/EN/ouvrage.php?id=378>> [accessed 10 December 2020].

⁵³⁴ Geoffrey Macnab, para. 6 of 10.

⁵³⁵ Atsushi Sasaki, 'Apichatpong Weerasethakul – Fever Room', *Asia Hundreds*, 5 July 2017, p.1
<<https://jfac.jp/en/culture/features/f-ah-tpam-apichatpong-weerasethakul>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

Beijing Contemporary Art Foundation, the Hong Kong-based Edouard Malingue Gallery, the Tokyo-based SCAI The Bathhouse, and the Bangkok-based 100 Tonson Foundation.

This global mobility of film financing signifies the new openness of film production, which has gradually shifted from the national context to collective efforts between producers from different countries.⁵³⁶ Apichatpong's co-production method has become a form of 'distributed financing' that manifests the convergence of both official and non-official co-production.⁵³⁷ Normally, an official co-production takes place with the assistance of formal intergovernmental agreements so that access to public support is possible. A non-official co-production is a private collaboration between producers of different countries. Apichatpong's co-production schemes consist of both structures of co-production. Unlike his earlier works that were co-produced between emerging small-scale production companies, Apichatpong's collaborators are now a mix of both new and established agencies. In *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, the Germany-based GFF Geissendoerfer Film-und Fernsehproduktion KG, launched in 1982, was founded by well-known producer-director Hans W Geissendoerfer.⁵³⁸ Similarly, its Spanish counterpart Eddie Saeta S.A.⁵³⁹ was founded in 1989 by filmmaker and producer Lluís Miñarro, who has produced and collaborated with many well-known directors including Manoel de Oliveira, Albert Serra and Naomi Kawase.

Due to the diversity in financial resources, there is no clear indication as to who takes the leading role in producing Apichatpong's films or owns the rights, especially when his finance network began to include stakeholders outside Europe. In the Asian-based system used in Pen-ek's case, the roles of the various producers suggest that the companies run by the executive producers hold the movie rights. But this is not clear in Apichatpong's case. Here, executive producers often seem to mean something else. Initially, the only people credited as executive producers were Eric Chan and Tiffany Chan on *Blissfully Yours and Syndromes and a Century*. As mentioned elsewhere, for *Blissfully Yours*, Eric Chan lent money to the director on a commercial investment basis, expecting it to be returned later.⁵⁴⁰ Simon Field and Keith Griffiths were also credited as executive producers for *Syndromes and a Century*, although the whole budget of that film came from the City of Vienna as part of its

⁵³⁶ Morawetz and others, p.422.

⁵³⁷ Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall, p.11.

⁵³⁸ GFF Geissendoerfer Film-und Fernsehproduktion KG, 'About Us', *GFF Geissendoerfer Film-und Fernsehproduktion KG*, [n.d.] <<https://www.gff.film/en/about-us/>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

⁵³⁹ Barcelona Film Commission, *EDDIE SAETA S.A.U.*, [n.d.] <<https://www.bcncatfilmcommission.com/en/companies-directory/eddie-saeta-sa>> [accessed 17 February 2021].

⁵⁴⁰ Sonthaya Subyen and Teekhadhet Vacharadhanin, p.204.

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New Crown Hope Project. And Choophong Ratanabanthoon and Hasskun Chanklom, representatives of GMM Pictures, were credited as executive producers of *The Adventures of Iron Pussy*. These producer roles variously reflect local, European co-production, and 'distributed financing' models of production. It is even more confusing that the term has been dropped altogether from the credits of Apichatpong's subsequent movies since *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*.

Anne Jäckel notes that the term 'co-production' has been 'a much-abused term'⁵⁴¹ which can refer to any form of co-financing, ranging from a presale or creative and financial collaboration between various producers. As already noted, Apichatpong's world sales distributor, The Match Factory, is responsible not only for distribution but is also an investor. Norbert Morawetz has tried to clarify these complexities of co-production by defining distinct terms: 'co-production,' 'co-financing,' and 'co-ventures.'⁵⁴² Co-production usually covers the ownership of the rights and the profits, while co-financing does not include rights ownership. Co-ventures mean co-production that no treaties. But in Apichatpong's case, these distinctions remain unclear. Since *Uncle Boonmee Who Recall His Past Lives*, those involved in his productions are referred to as producers, co-producers, and associate producers, but these terms are used inconsistently too. For example, while Hans W. Geissendoerfer (of GFF Geissendoerfer Film-und Fernsehproduction KG) and Michael Weber (of The Match Factory) were credited as co-producers of *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, both were credited as producers of *Cemetery of Splendour*. The same occurred with Danny Glover of Louverture Films, who was credited as associate producer of *Uncle Boonmee* but co-producer of *Cemetery of Splendour*. Judging by Pen-ek and Apichatpong's cases, it seems that these terms are defined and mobilized variably depending on the director, the project, and the territory, symbolizing the complexity of financing and producing in contemporary global art cinema.

The fact that Apichatpong has produced his films himself enables him to work closely with all the other potential producers,⁵⁴³ especially in collaborations within the Asian region. With so many agents and institutions to be involved in his production and exhibition process, Apichatpong, I argue, has an important role as an intermediary between the various mechanisms. Usually, in a field of cultural production, according to Bourdieu, when an artist wants to build up his own autonomy, he has to confront the Académie and the 'process' that originally leads to the 'universe

⁵⁴¹ Jäckel, p.58.

⁵⁴² Morawetz, p.64.

⁵⁴³ Baumgärtel, p.184.

of artists' functions as an 'apparatus being hierarchized and controlled by a corps,' and then constructs itself as a 'field of competition for the monopoly of artist legitimacy'. This latest process is known as 'a process of the institutionalization of anomie.'⁵⁴⁴ It designates the constitution of a field in which an artist has to follow certain rules, and the notion of a 'universe of artists' so that no one can claim to be 'absolute master and possessors of the nomos, of the principle of vision, and legitimate division'. Manet struggled to maintain their freedom from this process and the Académie's control. Although Bourdieu suggested sociological view as tools to analyse the construction of an artist and the norm of artistic universe, through several levels of the form of capital, a cultural producer (in his case the writer and artist) can also produce himself as a creator or as 'the *subject* of his own creation' if he succeeds in undertaking 'the specific labour that [he] had to accomplish' by resisting or following 'the determinations' constructed by society.⁵⁴⁵ Even in the 'art for art's sake group,' the position he takes is 'a position to be made,' so that he can avoid those in the field of power which can be supposed to exist or not.⁵⁴⁶ A cultural producer can also produce works that are either dependent or independent from a group or institution's interests and values by using the resources proposed by the group or institution.⁵⁴⁷ In some circumstances, the institutions – Bourdieu's example is Paris' Salon de Peinture et de Sculpture – can be the right place for 'genuine articulations' [of ideas], in which the writers or artists can 'assure for themselves a mediating control of the different material or symbolic rewards distributed by the state'.⁵⁴⁸ With this in mind, I argue, in the field of production of contemporary global art cinema, where numerous agents and institutions are involved in one project, as in Apichatpong's works, the artist can have a central role as a mediator between the agents, despite a load of hard works. Furthermore, unlike the artistic and literary worlds in which the artist is normally involved with a smaller group of agents and institutions, a field of restricted production like the global art cinema has to be integrated with a larger circle at the global level. And as the members of his network are so dispersed, despite some hierarchies among them, the director-as-producer can also become a central controller in the field of production. Arguably, he is both Iordanova's 'sole trader' and Ahn's cultural intermediary, bridging the gap between Thailand and the rest of the world, in the same way as Wouter Barendrecht connected Pen-ek Ratanaruang to other parts of the world, or Gertjan Zuilhof and Paolo Bertolin in helping Anocha's international achievement.

⁵⁴⁴ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.132.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.104.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.76.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.257-258.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.51.

Apichatpong's position in his network can be related to what Hamid Naficy calls the 'interstitial mode of production,' producing interstitial cinema. However, Apichatpong's interstitial position relates not to the social conditions of Naficy's 'accented cinema'⁵⁴⁹ – migration, diaspora, exile – but to the conjunctions of 'alternative' conditions in the field of cinematic practice. With the changing pattern of migration [as well as social class in Southeast Asia](#), I argue the notion of interstitial authorship has to be redefined as the 'post-interstitial' authorship.

3.4 Rethinking post-interstitial authorship

Typically, they are educated or work abroad temporarily, acquiring practical savvy and developing international contacts. Their films are, in most cases, financed internationally. They regularly spend extended periods abroad, but then return to work at home. They are globetrotting to fundraise and for festivals, yet they see advantages in shooting within their domestic environment and opt to stay in the region for the most intense periods of their work.⁵⁵⁰

Jordanova's assertion about Asian filmmakers and their temporary 'artistic migration'⁵⁵¹ is useful in explaining Apichatpong's transnational modes of film practice, which seem to take traditional methods to the extreme. Initially, he was inclined to adopt the European tradition of variegated film industries, utilizing both public and private funds as well as industrial co-productions. But the complexity of his collaborations – up to thirty stakeholders – means his projects now involve a much more patchwork-like investment structure, or what I define as personal distributed financing – referring to the fundraising specifically from a director's contacts. Furthermore, the philanthropic supporters – those involved in the promotion of the arts, cinema and social issues – make his oeuvre like a kind of non-governmental project for a better world. In addition, several financial contributions are sustained by the emotional capital from friends.

I prefer to explain Apichatpong's international mode of finance in terms of global 'post-interstices,' which I extend from Hamid Naficy's discussion of the interstitial mode of production. According to Naficy, 'alternative modes and innovation' emerge from many 'cracks, tensions, and contradictions,' that emanate from the dominance of the 'postindustrial mode of production,' which focuses on homogeneity and eliminates opposition.⁵⁵² Writing in 2001, when the economy

⁵⁴⁹ Naficy, 2001.

⁵⁵⁰ Jordanova, East Asia and Film Festival, p.22.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid, p.21.

⁵⁵² Naficy, p.42.

was increasingly globally centralized and media ownership ever more concentrated, the notions of ‘globalization,’ ‘privatization,’ ‘diversification,’ ‘deregulation,’ ‘digitization,’ ‘convergence,’ and ‘consolidation’ took on a particular intensity. These forces still exist in the contemporary world, but I argue that the world is shifting towards a paradigm of decentralization and fragmentation. For example, while Hollywood movies still become part of every country’s ‘domestic’ culture, a large number of independent filmmakers have also come to the fore in the last two decades, caused by the growth of ‘interstitials.’ ‘To be interstitial,’ according to Naficy, is to ‘operate both within and astride the cracks of the system, benefiting from its contradictions, anomalies, and heterogeneity.’ It also means being ‘located at the intersection of the local and the global, mediating between the two contrary categories, which in syllogism are called ‘subalternity’ and ‘superalternity.’”⁵⁵³ In other words, Apichatpong’s mode of production should be examined not only as the opposite of the mainstream Thai film industry and Hollywood but as interstitial because he stands at the intersection of the local, regional and the global, through the various modes of financing and production. Like many accented filmmakers, interstitial filmmakers have to seek additional financing from a range of public and private sources.⁵⁵⁴ Many of Apichatpong’s co-production schemes are also enabled by capital from a peculiar mixed economy, consisting of both studios and small-scale independent companies. Sudarat Musikapong suggests that the collaboration between the Thai film industry allows Apichatpong to ‘remain true to his ‘independent’ aesthetic and content,’⁵⁵⁵ while using his cultural capital to access his international audience. As a result, to think about Apichatpong’s mode of production as marginalized is not totally correct because his filmmaking practices always stand alongside and outside the dominant players at the global level – not only in one region, but also across the world and across disciplines. Only the support he received from Asian conglomerates has ceased. Both studios that supported his productions closed down their programs after a few years. His situation conforms to Asuman Suner’s⁵⁵⁶ assertion about interstitial filmmakers – that they ‘resonate against prevailing cinematic production practices, as well as benefit from them.’

Some limitations also exist in purely justifying Apichatpong’s works in the old paradigm of interstitial modes of production. In this case, it more fits into what I define as post-interstitial practices, especially when he goes beyond European territories. Ingawanij argues that Southeast

⁵⁵³ Ibid., p.46.

⁵⁵⁴ Naficy, p.47.

⁵⁵⁵ Sudarat Musikawong, p.256.

⁵⁵⁶ Asuman Suner, ‘Outside in: ‘Accented Cinema’ at Large’, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 7:3, 363-382 (p.368) <DOI: 10.1080/14649370600849223> [accessed 12 June 2021].

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Asian independent filmmakers follow 'artisanal practices' and 'negotiated dependence' in their access to the contemporary filmmaking system. Those who can reach the global art cinema arena, in particular, have to deal with 'a more complex kind of interdependence.'⁵⁵⁷ Nuno Barradas Jorge also notes that small-scale production models by relying on a co-dependence of national and international public funding make creative independence possible. In his opinion, Naficy's term interstitial can be used with any other forms of filmmaking that rely on low budgets and on the use of digital video, not only the 'exilic and diasporic,'⁵⁵⁸ as he also uses it in studying Pedro Costa's works. This mode of production has been adopted by many independent filmmakers, such as Indonesia's Edwin, who has accessed both local and international financial support, allowing him more freedom of expression, as well as wider distribution for his works.⁵⁵⁹ In Apichatpong's case, he negotiates his bargaining power through his 'co-dependence' on international film funding bodies and multiple co-producers so that he can maintain his unique 'creative independence' – the elaboration of Thai memory and American avant-garde cinematic/European languages. Unlike many other independent filmmakers, his focus is not on reducing his budgets. In fact, most of his works were shot on celluloid, except *The Adventure of Iron Pussy*, *Mekong Hotel*, *Cemetery of Splendour* and some shorts. His typical feature budget of around 800,000 Euros is not considered cheap by Thai standards, which sometimes can be as low as £125,000.

Furthermore, Hamid Naficy's concept of 'interstitial' seems to position 'diasporic/transnational filmmaking only in the interstitial and marginal spaces of national cinemas'.⁵⁶⁰ Instead, with the changing paradigm of temporary migration as addressed by Dina Iordanova's quote at the beginning of this section, contemporary 'post-interstitial' filmmakers, arguably, do not always need to suffer from their 'accented, dislocatory, migratory and exilic' characteristics as before. In fact, Thai filmmakers who travel these days for their filmmaking purposes usually are celebrated at home. Post-interstitial, in my terms, should still retain Naficy's focus on the mode of production and film style, rather than 'ideology and the politics of representation.'⁵⁶¹ Apichatpong does not

⁵⁵⁷ May Adadol Ingawanij, 'Introduction: Dialectics of Independence', in *Glimpses of Freedom: Independent Cinema in Southeast Asia*, ed. by May Adadol Ingawanij and Benjamin (New York: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 1-14 (pp.4-5).

⁵⁵⁸ Jorge, pp.54.

⁵⁵⁹ Miaw Lee Teo, 'Interstitial Filmmaking, Spatial Displacement and Quasi-Family Ties in *Postcard from the Zoo (2012)*', *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, 15:1 (2021), 56-72 (p.4)
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/17508061.2021.1926155>> [accessed 14 June 2022]

⁵⁶⁰ Higbee and Lim, p.10.

⁵⁶¹ Arezou Zalipour, 'Interstitial and Collective Filmmaking in New Zealand: the Case of Asian New Zealand Film', *Transnational Cinemas*, 7:1 (2016), 96-110 (p.102)
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/20403526.2016.1111670>> [accessed 14 June 2022].

act out the role of 'intercultural or accented filmmaker,'⁵⁶² who usually raises a crisis of identity as their concern, resulting from 'intercultural, diasporic, exilic, post-colonial, or accented subjects inhabit the interstices, a no-mans-land in-between indigenous and exogenous cultures, nations, histories, territories, languages, and identities.'⁵⁶³ Instead, he emphasizes the representations of urban provincial towns that happen to be in the northeast of Thailand, differing from the 'northeastern-themed' movies – known in term of 'Nang Isan' – that became popular in the region in the mid-2010s. May Adadol Ingawanij and Richard Lowell MacDonald note that Apichatpong's background remains 'unrepresentative of the economic marginality of the provincial underclass, despite the expression of provincial cultural insecurity.'⁵⁶⁴ He never used northeastern Thai dialect until the making of *Cemetery of Splendour*. To some extent, the images of Khon Kaen and the jungles of the northeast, as well as the representations of media and cultural reproductions that are highlighted in his works, could be anywhere outside the capital city. His characters are a mixture of the professional middle class, the lower class and minorities – doctors, soldiers, farm owners, Burmese migrants, factory workers, the wife of a civil servant. His cultural references vary from popular music that is appreciated by middle-class youngsters everywhere to folklore and ghost stories. He does not try to reproduce a specific culture – like northeastern dance or music that is often treated as representing the region – as he admits that he is not what people might think of as a typical north-easterner: 'Actually, I do not want to disintegrate what is Isan, what is not. I am middle-class, half-Chinese, and a son of physicians. It is better to call it 'provincial people, provincial film.' And why does Bangkok have to be centralized in almost everything? How can we live in this space and ensure our voices are heard?'⁵⁶⁵

One of the most noticeable aspects of Apichatpong's works is his presentation of dialectical contrasts between things, events, or spaces, especially his use of time in the trilogy of *Blissfully Yours*, *Tropical Malady*, and *Syndromes and a Century*. *Blissfully Yours* (2002) reflects his memories of his hometown and the places where he grew up – from his parents' clinic to the jungle he roamed around – against a depiction of the relationship between a Burmese migrant and a young Thai woman. The film is divided into two sections, with the first part focusing on their attempt to get the man an ID card, and the second following them on a picnic in the jungle. Similarly, *Tropical Malady*

⁵⁶² Leather, p.101.

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Ingawanij and MacDonald, p.120.

⁵⁶⁵ Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 'Kwam Chuea Nai Phumiphab Isan Kong Apichatpong Weerasethakul' [Faith in the Northeast of Apichatpong Weerasethakul], *Isan Creative Festival* (Khon Kaen: Khon Kaen University, 10 January 2019).

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invokes memories of his life in its story of the love affair between two gay men in Apichatpong's hometown Khon Kaen. At the half-way point, the characters suddenly become a hunter and a tiger-man in the jungle, and remain as such for the remainder of the film. *Syndromes and a Century* can be seen in terms of his hometown's encounter with modernity, the decline of the city being seen from the point of view of two doctors in a hospital – the doctors being homages to the director's parents. Scholars interpret this duality in different ways. German filmmaker Ulrich Kohler sees Apichatpong as someone who succeeds in connecting a mystical level with the experiences of modern life.⁵⁶⁶ Brett Farmer finds 'a cinema of odd conjunctions that confounds and frustrates, as much as it dazzles and seduces.'⁵⁶⁷ Kim Jihoon discusses the narrative structure marked by a spatial gap between the two halves of a story in terms of 'interstices.'⁵⁶⁸ Sicinski explores Apichatpong's bifurcated or folded time as the 'reboot' phase of each film, which can be read as the director's way to organize cinematically a shift from one reality to another – usually between the world of material existence and the spiritual world of nonhuman existence such as ghosts, monsters or supernatural beings.⁵⁶⁹ For Apichatpong, time is, as Sicinski puts it, two different planes of reality. One could be the unconscious mirror to the other, or the second narrative could be the retroactive revision or deferred action retro-present of the first.

⁵⁶⁶ Sicinski, p.196.

⁵⁶⁷ Brett Farmer, (para.2 of 6).

⁵⁶⁸ Kim Jihoon, p.126.

⁵⁶⁹ Sicinski, pp.196-204.



Figure 3. 2 Bifurcated time. Two lovers in the town and jungle from *Blissfully Yours* (top) and two lovers turn to be a tiger and a hunter in *Tropical Malady* (bottom)

May Adadol Ingawanij and Richard Lowell MacDonald⁵⁷⁰ find the use of European and American modernism and the avant-garde to represent the aesthetics of provincial culture in his works emerge from his 'educational pilgrimage from Thailand to Chicago.' Arguably, this 'in-between' state of things had already manifested in Apichatpong as an identity conflict even before he went to Chicago. The director has long questioned the provincial-urban disparity between his hometown and Bangkok, feeling embarrassed by his northeastern roots and its association with low-class 'café comedy' when he was young.⁵⁷¹ David Teh argues that Apichatpong's northeastern experience is one that has consistently been 'under-represented in national historiography and politics apropos Thailand,' despite the region's role as supplier of labour and popular culture to the rest of the country.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ Ingawanij and MacDonald, p.123.

⁵⁷¹ 'Café comedy' refers to the stand-up comedy that used to be found in cheap pubs or bars, which was popular during the 1990s and early 2000s. Comedians often used regional dialects to deliver crude jokes. Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 'Kwam chuea nai phumiphab Isan kong Apichatpong Weerasethakul'.

⁵⁷² David Teh, 'Itinerant Cinema', *Third Text*, 25:5 (2011), 595-609, p.600
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2011.608973>> [accessed 10 June 2022].

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In his subsequent films, the duality of time, space and narration are developed into a paradigm of the multiplicity and transfiguration of beings. In *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, the protagonist's past lives have seen him take many forms: human, animal, ghost. These past lives have been seen as 'multiple temporal and cinematic disruptions'.⁵⁷³ Apichatpong has admitted that this state of multiplicity is a reflection of his own interests and beliefs: 'I believe in the transmigration of souls between humans, plants, animals, and ghosts.'⁵⁷⁴ Furthermore, the binary contrast between his provincial lifestyle and the high-art language of avant-garde/European cinema is complicated by the use of mixed media in the film, ranging from the reinvention of Thai popular entertainment (comics, Thai costume dramas, television series), new media (the use of stills) and the aesthetic traditions of avant-garde cinema. It can be argued that, by combining this profusion of formats and media platforms into the texts and contexts of *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, Apichatpong exemplifies a new type of cinematic authorship deriving from various forms of 'interstitial' activity that are performed not simply in duality, but in multiplicity.



Figure 3. 3 Multiple lives in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*

As a result, Apichatpong gives more voice to the alternative experience of marginalized Thais through what Zalipour⁵⁷⁵ advocates as 'personal/creative articulation' and 'a professional commitment to filmmaking.' He actively refers to his childhood memories and experiences as the main resources of expression for his avant-garde filmmaking style. Even when he decides to depend on someone else's story, as in the background of *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, which is based on a book about a man in the last stage of his life, the film still contains tributes to

⁵⁷³ Sicinski, p.197

⁵⁷⁴ The Match Factory, *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, last page.

⁵⁷⁵ Zalipour, p.102.

the director's father, the land and the movies that he grew up with.⁵⁷⁶ In general, memories in Apichatpong's movies can be divided into reflections on people, places, culture, and process, each of which is not mutually exclusive from the others. Memories incorporate those who are close to him, like his parents, his cast, and his crew. The settings are often based on Khon Kaen, where he grew up, though the director has been living in Chiang Mai for almost a decade. Most importantly is the representation of Thai culture and folklore, ranging from entertainment experienced through old media like television, radio, cinema, and comics to primitive folklore, rituals, and beliefs.

This incorporation and assemblage of the visual arts and Thai cultural production alongside the American avant-garde and European art film traditions has raised the question of purity that is often expected from the works of avant-garde filmmakers. Barrett Hodsdon⁵⁷⁷ argues that in creating such works, the projection of the personal equates to 'filmmaker's eyes = cinema apparatus = visual field = representational scheme,' and then becomes 'an extremely fluid one enmeshed in a sphere which often aspires to negotiate pure forms of phenomenological visualization.' In Apichatpong's context, I argue, the discourse of purity becomes a complex issue that needs more consideration of how the *mind* perceives changing environments, rather than insisting on a holistic conclusion using the previous ideology. It is his mind that works with cinema, not the eyes. He sees the world in the 'framework of an apperceptive cinema.'⁵⁷⁸ As a result, process is more important for Apichatpong to create a film, not his thoughts or visual perceptions alone. Apichatpong's 'perception' can be considered as pure *projection*, but in a different way than other avant-gardists. His memories and filmmaking methods can be considered as hybrid, due to his multiple backgrounds in arts and culture – east and west, low and high, cinema and visual art – normally in the realms of duality and later multiplicity. He has to encounter and negotiate internally with those diverse forces in constructing his fluid perceptive projection and delivers without the interference of external forces. The equation becomes the filmmaker's [voluntary] hybrid 'perception' = hybrid cinema apparatus = hybrid 'sensual' field = hybrid representational scheme. Accordingly, he has observed that his movies are hybrid like Thai society and made from the memories of an adult who just happens to be a filmmaker.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁶ Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 'Interview with Apichatpong Weerasethakul', *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, dir. by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, 2010 (UK: New Wave Films) [on DVD].

⁵⁷⁷ Hodsdon, p.93.

⁵⁷⁸ Sitney, *Visionary Film*, p.348.

⁵⁷⁹ Ekkasat Sapphachang, p.132.

In these senses, those forces that he has constructed through his life originate from his upbringing, childhood lifestyle, and education. Sitting in the interstices between many contrasting spheres as mentioned above, Apichatpong has also employed these in-between states of things in making his works, both aesthetically and financially. Just as his mode of authorship defines a new perspective on hybrid art/avant-garde cinema, Apichatpong's financial strategies have also generated a new paradigm of global film financing that might be adopted as a model for contemporary art cinema, especially for those working beyond Europe. He has become what I prefer to identify as a post-interstitial art filmmaker, open to all possible financial resources that have emerged among the cracks of global film financing so that the financial risks will be distributed among multiple partners and public institutions. Under this co-dependence of mixed and various film industries and visual arts, he can maintain his creative independence to the greatest extent.

3.5 Conclusion

This research reflects a new complexity in the production of global arts cinema, which is no longer simply integrated with the variegated film industry encompassing both public and private funds, but is increasingly characterised by homemade filmmaking style, the utilization of emotional and social capital, and personal distributed financing. Global cinema policy is not simply exercised through a network of film festival circuits or European funding agencies, as it has previously been understood. In navigating this new landscape, adopting the dual role of producer-director, I argue, enables Apichatpong to maintain his creative freedom. Recognizing this will be useful not only to the policymakers in the Southeast Asian region but also those global funders reconsidering the strategies that can continue to support global arts cinema. To be a global author, it is necessary to develop a personal network that can shape one's cinema. In the case of Apichatpong, his network of relationships involves public and private funders from around the world and in both cinema and visual arts fields, including studios and independent agencies. The findings of this study will also benefit film policy theorists to rethink the methods that can be used in financing global arts cinema, and can guide other researchers looking at similar issues in other parts of the world.

The multifarious characteristics of financing and film style are what underpin the hybrid condition of Apichatpong's works, which do not simply originate from the realm of national/international or genre aesthetics. Neither do his works simply orchestrate the nature of Thai provinciality or European/American avant-garde tradition. To conclude, his post-interstitial filmmaking style combines all of his memories and experiences as an urban Thai in the poorest region of Thailand, and as a migrant in Chicago during his studies. Due to his social background in the Thai film culture and changing modes of temporary migration, his cinematic texts touch upon alternative themes

beyond the questions of subjectivities, identities, diaspora and migration. So far the notions of transnationalism and border-crossing films in Asia are to some extent maintained within old paradigms and arguments, relying on well-worn terms like 'dissensus', 'displacement', 'mobilities'.⁵⁸⁰ Ran Ma, for example, has studied the authorship of independent border-crossing films in Southeast and East Asia and finds that their 'micro-practices' are embedded in both 'translocal (local-to-local),' and 'transnational' networks of production, circulation, and exhibition.⁵⁸¹ Their authorship articulates dialogues of 'minor transnationalism' and connects with the actions of the 'dissensual' in 'modifying the 'policed' articulations and representations of minority and marginalized identities and groups.⁵⁸² Apichatpong's works, however, do not fit into this type of interpretation at all. Instead, he develops his concepts in domestic space, and then leapfrogs Southeast Asian and Asian production collaboration in favour of Europe and other parts of the world, at least until recently. Moreover, neither his storytelling nor his aesthetic practices began with translocal approaches, but likewise skip over the Asian continent to Europe and America, returning to Asia sometimes. In other words, his works and practices have moved beyond 'in-between' politics to embrace all possible opportunities that may come his way of production, especially as his projects have grown more international. Emma Louise Leather's concept of 'transvergence' is relevant here:

Transnationalism occurs in the interstices between the local and the global, between centre and periphery, while transvergence underlies the possibility of shifting back and forth between the two, enabling those who exist in the interstices to forge connections with both the local and the global, with both centre and periphery.⁵⁸³

This notion of transvergence can perhaps explain the characteristics of border crossings in Apichatpong's mode of practices and works. By placing his works – and those of many other contemporary filmmakers who use similar methods – under the paradigm of transvergence, it questions the regional integration addressed by many Asian theorists in the making of Asian transnational cinema. In the case of Apichatpong, regional integration was limited and inconsistent. In other words, he challenges the formation of interstitial cinema by elaborating his memories in a new combinatory hybridity that differs from other forms of interstitial cinema, such as Naficy's

⁵⁸⁰ Ma, pp.40-42.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, p.28.

⁵⁸² Ibid, p.22.

⁵⁸³ Emma Louise Leather, 'Interstitial Cinema: The Liminal Visions of Jose Luis Guerin and March Recha' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2008), p.61.

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accented cinema. It also raises a new debate on interstitial cinema, in the sense that it does not disrupt the films' purity. Applying Kim Jihoon's interpretation of the interrelation between cinema and visual art in Apichatpong's works, it can be said that the purity of Apichatpong's projections have been supplemented by expanding another mode of purity. 'It is striving to redefine and transform itself through its negotiation with and the containment of its contiguous media practices and the spatiotemporal aesthetics they articulate.'⁵⁸⁴ Perhaps this is the best path for today's art cinema to pursue, he suggests.

This is a crucial debate that I argue should be further examined in studies of global authorship – not only in comparison to other Southeast Asian cinemas, but also in other regions. I argue that some new approaches and theoretical developments are emerging concerning the dialogues of diasporic and transnational cinemas which make Naficy's concept inapplicable in contemporary society. Most importantly, focusing on modes of perception in contemporary cinema might suggest directions for further study of the hybridity of avant-garde cinema.

⁵⁸⁴ Kim Jihoon, p.125.

Chapter 4 Anocha Suwichakornpong and the Construction of Institutional Authorship

[Auteurism] turned out to be a very human attitude that grew more stable despite the criticism. Indeed, this stability seems impervious to all scholarly argument, in part because auteurism has enabled so much activity, helping people to talk, to think about film – and because it has grown ever-more institutionally entrenched, providing its users with both collective and individual benefits over time.⁵⁸⁵

In the preceding two chapters, I have discussed the characteristics of transnational authorship, in regard to collaborative and post-interstitial authorship, constructed through the dialogues of negotiation and mobilization. In this last chapter, a new approach towards authorship is employed to explore the global emergence of female filmmaker Anocha Suwichakornpong, who started her cinematic journey in 2006 after her graduation from Columbia University one year earlier. At that time, Thai cinema and global art cinema were on the pinnacle of achievement, associated with figures such as Pen-ek and Apichatpong. Anocha has reaped the rewards of these breakthroughs, both domestically and internationally. Unlike those earlier success stories, who entered the world film industry via collaborations with experienced international producers, Anocha has pursued her career more autonomously, choosing whatever channels have offered themselves to facilitate her brand of independent art filmmaking - from film festivals to emerging sales agents and what I define as the network of transnational authorship. Starting with European-centric film festivals, she immersed herself in what Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong⁵⁸⁶ calls ‘alternative sites for the production, distribution, and exhibition of independent film from all over the world.’ Anocha has made several shorts, three features – *Mundane History* (Jao Nok Krajok, 2009), *By the Time It Gets Dark* (Dao Khanong, 2016), *Come Here* (Jai Jumlong, 2021) - and one documentary, *Krabi, 2562* (2019, co-directed with British filmmaker Ben Rivers). She set up her production company Electric Eel Films early on to produce her works and those of other upcoming independent directors.⁵⁸⁷ After Anocha’s second feature, *By the Time It Gets Dark* – a multi-narrative story concerning characters involved in the student uprising in Thailand in 1976 – was selected as Thailand’s nominee for the Academy Awards’ foreign film competition, she moved into American academia by taking on a

⁵⁸⁵ Andrews, p.186.

⁵⁸⁶ Wong, p.5.

⁵⁸⁷ Anocha’s producing features include *Silencio* (Sivaroj Kongsakul, 2006), *In April the Following Year, There Was a Fire* (Wichanon Somumjarn, 2012), *Concrete Clouds* (Lee Chatametikool, 2013), and *How to Win at Checkers (Every Time)* (Josh Kim, 2015).

visiting lectureship at Harvard University. In 2019, thirteen years after her debut, she was the recipient of the Prince Claus Award, offering her more opportunities to do fellowships or residencies around the world – from Berlin’s DAAD artists-in-residence programme to Minneapolis’s Walker Art Centre. In 2022, she moved to teach at Columbia University. As this demonstrates, Anocha's training and development into a professional participant in film culture have been transnational in nature.

Anocha’s achievements can be attributed to the intertextual relationship between auteurism, art cinema and the mode of institution that was first acknowledged by Steve Neale and has often been taken up by subsequent scholars, particularly in European contexts (see introduction chapter). The institutionalization of authorship is relocated from national to transnational dialogues. In fact, as a part of this process, contemporary institutional authorship is constructed not only through networks of film festivals, but also distributors, academic film studies, as well as the intertextuality with other authors. Her authorship seems to be hidden under the paradigm of ‘institutional author,’ or what Yannis Tzioumakis calls extratextual authorial agency,⁵⁸⁸ which produces intertext-based authorship.⁵⁸⁹ To implement this objective, I use a wide range of methods and resources, including the websites of relevant film festivals and media reporting on the wider film festival circuit, as the basis of my analysis. I then move on to focus on the politics of the Asian and European festival circuits that force Anocha to choose to align her experimental style of filmmaking with one or the other. I will also analyse how she is known to the public by using Jonathan Gray's concept of attachment and Simon Hobbs' theory of an audience's memory. Her US connection, from education to lectureship and residency, might explain her recent migration to the US. Last but not least, the concept of a ‘global generation’ might explain the recent emergence of transnational filmmakers in the last decade.

⁵⁸⁸ Yannis Tzioumakis, ‘Marketing David Mamet: Institutionally Assigned Film Authorship in Contemporary American Cinema’, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 57 (Spring 2006), 60-75 (p.66)
<<https://doi.org/10.1353/vlt.2006.0023>> [28 April 2020].

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

4.1 The geopolitics of film festivals

Unlike Pen-ek and Apichatpong who were first discovered as a result of being feature filmmakers (Pen-ek for *Fun Bar Karaoke* and Apichatpong for *Mysterious Object at Noon*), Anocha entered the film festival networks right after her completion of master degree from the US in 2005. As it has already been known, film festivals have been largely constructed as a centre of niche world business where pre-production, production, and post-production initiatives are established since the 1990s.⁵⁹⁰ They are ‘cultural bazaars,’⁵⁹¹ ‘multilayered global industrial events’⁵⁹² that have institutionalized small global movies through their production networks, enabling what Chris Berry has called ‘full service cinema.’⁵⁹³ Film festivals, through their on-site training, help new talents prepare for the transnational practices of the contemporary film industry.⁵⁹⁴ While most scholarship on the film festival network institutionalizes festival structures as the focal point, arguably resulting in the presumption of festival organizations as active and powerful agents and of filmmakers as largely passive contributors, my exploration sees filmmakers as mutually and bilaterally interdependent with institutions. Film festivals have chosen Anocha, but she has also chosen them. Challenging the dominance of film festival circuits proposed by most theorists,⁵⁹⁵ we might start to think that each arthouse auteur has their network, just as the film festivals do, and that Anocha has deliberately constructed her professional route through them since the very beginning, from film student to professional feature filmmaker. Before completing film school, Anocha had only two student shorts, *Full Moon* (2003) and *Ghosts* (2005), which were screened at the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival, the Los Angeles-based VC FILMFEST, the Asian American International Film Festival, and a special event entitled Thai Takes 2. She was unknown in Thailand until she showed both shorts at the Thai Short Film & Video Festival.⁵⁹⁶ After that, she registered on the Script Clinic course at the 2006 Berlinale Talents to develop a project called *The White Room*, a narrative about a young Japanese man who has grown up in Thailand and develops romantic ideas about his homeland. A few months later, the student-oriented program

⁵⁹⁰ Falicov, *The Festival Film*, p.210.

⁵⁹¹ Davis and Yeh, p.142.

⁵⁹² Wong, p.129.

⁵⁹³ Chris Berry, ‘Full Service Cinema: The South Korean Cinema Success Story (So Far)’, in *Text and Context of Korean Cinema: Crossing Borders*, ed. by Young-Key Kim Renaud et al. Sigur Center Asia Paper No.17, pp.7-16, cited in Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals* (see above at n.367), p.17.

⁵⁹⁴ De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European* p.109.

⁵⁹⁵ Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood, 2005*; Iordanova, *The Film Festival Circuit, 2009*; Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals, 2011*.

⁵⁹⁶ Electric Eel Films, *Mundane History* (Thai Press Kit) [Bangkok (?), 2010].

Chapter 4

Cinéfondation – begun by the Cannes International Film Festival in 1998 to select short or medium-length films from film schools all over the world – selected her thesis film *Graceland*, a one-night journey of a man dressed as Elvis Presley and a woman, which was the first and only Thai short to be screened there at that point. Such preliminary instructional and exhibition opportunities can be seen as ‘training grounds for future festival filmmakers’ through which festivals position themselves as ‘donors of film prestige.’⁵⁹⁷ If Columbia University taught her production methods, film festivals have offered what Marijke de Valck calls the ‘postgraduate’⁵⁹⁸ level of art film education, explicitly modifying themselves from ‘sites of discovery’ to ‘sites of initiation.’



Figure 4. 1 *Graceland* at Cannes' Cinéfondation selection

De Valck observes that it is a sense of competition between top-level festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, and Venice that has resulted in the creation of training programs that create a broad alumni network.⁵⁹⁹ In practice, however, each film festival can offer limited support to their alumni and then cannot promote their works well enough. The Cinéfondation, for example, runs two five-month-long programmes called The Residence to train young filmmakers from around the world. Only a few of their alumni can have their works shown at the festival. Berlinale Talents hosts a large number of filmmakers each year and hence it is difficult to accommodate all the works by the trainees in the Berlinale program. Whereas Pen-ek and Apichatpong premiered their early works in the big three events of Berlin, Cannes, and Venice, Anocha has only been invited to those festivals as a ‘student.’ None of her feature films screened there until 2021, thirteen years after her first film. That year, her third feature, *Come Here*, an installation feature telling the story of four friends confronting the World War II memorial site of the Death Railway, premiered in the International

⁵⁹⁷ Wong, p.146.

⁵⁹⁸ Marijke de Valck, 'Sites of Initiation: Film Training Programs at Film Festivals', in *The Education of the Filmmaker in Europe, Australia, and Asia*, ed. by Mette Hjort (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), pp.127-145 (p. 141).

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, p.139.

Forum of Young Cinema section of the Berlin International Film Festival. Similarly, despite Anocha being a Berlin alumnus, financial aid from that festival's highly competitive World Cinema Fund has proved more likely to be awarded to established names such as Apichatpong and Pen-ek. Anocha has not received any. This might explain why, in the decade after her graduation from Columbia, Anocha has largely constructed her network of middle-tier film festivals like the IFFR, the Locarno Film Festival, the Paris Project, the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF), and the Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF), all of which offer two strong components that can appeal to a young newcomer: funding grants and co-production opportunities. In the thirteen years since the release of her directorial debut, Anocha has made several shorts and four features, most of which have received support from film festivals such as these, primarily the IFFR.

The IFFR has supported Anocha more than any other organization, awarding seven types of assistance for her three features, *Mundane History*⁶⁰⁰ (2009), *By the Time It Gets Dark* (2016), and *Come Here* (2021). All three films received money from the Hubert Bals Fund's (HBF) script and development fund, in 2006, 2013, and 2018 respectively. *Mundane History*, a portrayal of a young man suffering from disability and loneliness, and living with an insensitive father, also received a post-production grant in 2009, as well as receiving €15,000 in prize money as the winner of the festival's Tiger Award in 2010, a win that also guaranteed the film distribution in the Benelux countries. *By the Time It Gets Dark* received grants from two other funds: the HBF+Europe Minority Co-production Support scheme and the CineMart's Prince Claus Fund. The IFFR also lent support to Anocha by screening her short films, which had received little recognition elsewhere: her thesis project *Graceland* (2006); *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner* (2010, an anthology film about love co-directed with Singapore's Kaz Cai and China's Wang Jing); *Overseas*, a short essay on the daily life of Burmese worker in a Thai factory area (2012, co-directed with Wichanon Somunjarn); *Thursday* (2015), a visual dialogue between Anocha and Bosnian artist Šejla Kamerić; and the installation *Coconut* (2015), about a Burmese worker in a coconut fibre plant. In other words, the IFFR has supported Anocha in all aspects of the filmmaking process, from production to distribution and exhibition, indicating its changing roles as a producer, distributor, and exhibitor.⁶⁰¹ The role of the IFFR in constructing Anocha as an auteur is discussed later in this chapter.

The now-defunct Paris Project, the co-production and project market of the Paris Cinema International Film Festival, was the second most prominent supporter of Anocha's work. It was first

⁶⁰⁰ The movie was originally entitled *The Sparrow*.

⁶⁰¹ Wong, 2011; De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, 2014; Falicov, *The Festival Film*, 2016.

launched in 2003 and became known as a meeting point for producers looking for partnerships and financing.⁶⁰² The project collaborated with several Asian film industries like South Korea and Hong Kong. Between 2009 and 2013, the project was connected with the Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum, disbursing one of its funding awards through that event. Three of Anocha's projects have been selected for its co-production forum: *Mundane History* and *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner* in 2009, and the never-completed project *Opening Hours* in 2010. The Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) also awarded an Asian Cinema Fund post-production grant to *Mundane History* in 2009 and selected *The White Room* for its Asian Project Market in 2010, where Anocha won a US\$10,000 prize. Since then, BIFF has staged the Asian premieres of *By the Time It Gets Dark* and *Krabi, 2562*, a documentary exploring the changing lives and landscape of the tourist resort Krabi in the south of Thailand, in 2016 and 2019 respectively. Among this festival network, the Hong Kong International Film Festival offered Anocha two pitching opportunities at the Hong Kong Asia Film Financing Forum - *Mundane History* in 2007 and *Roundtrip*⁶⁰³ in 2011. Other occasional supporters include Produire Au Sud Bangkok, a workshop organized collaboratively since 2005 by the Nantes-based Festival des 3 Continents and the World Film Festival of Bangkok, and aimed at Southeast Asian filmmakers, a wave of whom were emerging at that time. *Mundane History* was selected as one of the entries. The Doha Film Institute awarded Anocha a grant from its bi-annual film fund for *By the Time It Gets Dark* in 2013, the first time a Thai film had received funding from that organisation. *Mundane History* also received the €10,000 best film prize from the Transilvania International Film Festival, the US\$50,000 best director prize from the Mumbai IFF, and the New Horizons International Film Festival's Grand Prix. For subsequent productions, she approached some other agencies such as Visions Sud Est, a Swiss fund that was initiated in 2005 by the Foundation trigon-film Baden and Fribourg IFF; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; and some lesser-known film festivals including Nyon's Visions du Reel, Locarno IFF, and Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur. In Asia, the Talents Tokyo initiative of Tokyo FilmEx was another funding source for her third feature *Come Here*.

⁶⁰² John Hopewell and Elsa Keslassy, 'Paris Project Offers in to French Biz', *Variety*, 12 July 2009 <<https://variety.com/2009/scene/markets-festivals/paris-project-offers-in-to-french-biz-1118005886/>> [accessed: 3 September 2019].

⁶⁰³ The original title of *Thursday*.

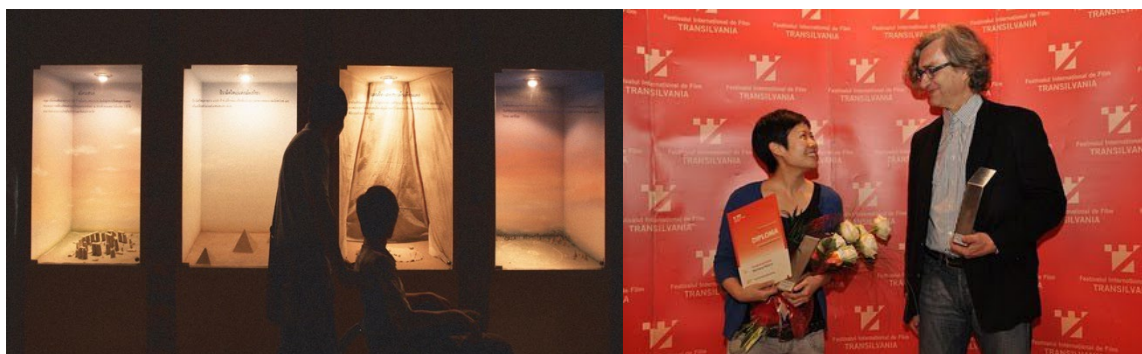


Figure 4.2 With Wim Wenders at Transilvania International Film Festival

From Anocha's funding trajectories, there are two points that should be addressed here concerning the transnational interdependence between film festivals and a global author. Firstly, more opportunities were offered to Anocha than had been to her predecessors Pen-ek and Apichatpong as she entered the arena at the right time, when numerous local and international support programmes had been strengthened by public funds. In the domestic space, the Culture Ministry that was reformulated at the turn of the century started to secure some additional funds to support independent filmmakers beyond the annual meagre fund for all arts and cultural activities. In 2009, a 200 million baht (£5 million) fund known as the Strong Economy was distributed to almost 100 projects for cinema, television series, and animation. Since then, some funds have been allocated to filmmaking and activities such as film pitching, albeit inconsistently. In Europe, this environment has been triggered by, firstly, a large amount of public money, and secondly, a number of active programs initiated by the Council of Europe. According to the European Audiovisual Observatory, more than 270 'supranational,' national, and 'subnational' public film funds were available across Europe between 2010 and 2014 for both European and non-European co-productions.⁶⁰⁴ The development of 'pro-active'⁶⁰⁵ programmes by the European Council meant that, in addition to Eurimages, the first real financial support programme for European film, dating from 1989,⁶⁰⁶ and the MEDIA programmes of Creative Europe supported by the European Commission in 1991, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) was founded in 2006 to give further

⁶⁰⁴ Julio Talavera Milla, Gilles Fontaine, and Martin Kanzler, *Public Financing for Film and Television Content: The State of Soft Money in Europe* (Strasbourg: European Audiovisual Observatory, 2015), p.26. <<https://rm.coe.int/public-financing-for-film-and-television-content-the-state-of-soft-mon/16808e46df>> [accessed 10 May 2022].

⁶⁰⁵ Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, and Redvall, p.3.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

assistance to audio-visual industries.⁶⁰⁷ These programmes were achieved through the organizations' adjustments and provided a context that was more integrated and made all modes of filmmaking from production, distribution, and exhibition more profitable, both within Europe itself and abroad.⁶⁰⁸ This pan-European collaboration has been seen by Steinhart as a repeat of the 1920s Film Europe movement that was intended to counter the dominance of Hollywood cinema,⁶⁰⁹ but it has transcended European borders this time. Together with the support from a variety of funding resources, film festivals have been employed as one of the channels through which to implement policies and connect filmmakers in other parts of the world, engendering the growth of festivals a few decades ago. Although an accurate number of film festivals in the world is difficult to calculate, the figure may be almost 10,000, with 2,954 active events.⁶¹⁰ In Southeast Asia, one significant festival-generated success has been the Produire au Sud workshops that were first introduced by the collaboration between the Festival des 3 Continents and World Film Festival of Bangkok to train young filmmakers in the region in how to access funding. The workshop declared its aim to be, "familiarizing producers based in the south with a variety of important tools: legal, screenwriting, financing, marketing strategies, and inter-professional relationships that are essential in the co-production process."⁶¹¹ This kind of practice corresponds to the rise of a generation that knows how to access information and immerse themselves as a 'part of the global film funding regime.'⁶¹² Many 'pitching projects' – a more common term in Thailand – have been offered around Southeast Asia since then, resulting in more young filmmakers doubling up as directors and producers in the last decade. While Pen-ek works with separate producers, Anocha and her contemporaries are producing their own works. In fact, this kind of author-producer is already known in Europe as 'new authorial figures,' having emerged since the 1990s.⁶¹³ To some

⁶⁰⁷ European Commission, 'European Education and Culture Executive Agency', *European Commission* [n.d.] <https://www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/about-eacea/about-eacea_en> [accessed: 15 January 2020].

⁶⁰⁸ Maule, p.54.

⁶⁰⁹ Daniel Steinhart, 'Fostering International Cinema: The Rotterdam Film Festival, CineMart, and the Hubert Bals Fund', *Mediascape*, 2 (Spring), 1-13 (p.6).

⁶¹⁰ Stephen Follows, 'How Many Film Festivals Are There in the World?', *Stephen Follows Film Data and Education*, 19 August 2013 <<https://stephenfollows.com/many-film-festivals-are-in-the-world/>> [accessed 1 May 2022].

⁶¹¹ World Film Festival of Bangkok, '2nd Produire au Sud Bangkok 2006', *4th World Film Festival of Bangkok* (Bangkok: Nation Multimedia Group, 2006), p.52.

⁶¹² Tamara L. Falicov, 'Cine en Construcción'/'Films in Progress': How Spanish and Latin American Filmmakers Negotiate the Construction of a Globalized Art-house Aesthetic', *Transnational Cinemas*, 4.2 (2013), 253-271 (p.266) <https://doi.org/10.1386/trac.4.2.253_1> [accessed 6 May 2021]

⁶¹³ Maule, p.41.

extent, this should confer more freedom to these directors, if compared to their predecessors who have tended to rely on others to produce their works.



Figure 4.3 Out of IFFR's loop - *Come Here*

Although film festivals have become a key to institutionalizing alternative and independent filmmakers in terms of funding, co-production, markets, and networking,⁶¹⁴ they do not control film production in the way commercial production companies often do, as Anocha's case shows. Despite receiving festival funds, some of her works premiered in other venues, such as *By the Time It Gets Dark* in Locarno, and *Come Here* at the Berlin International Film Festival, which had offered her no funds. In fact, *By the Time It Gets Dark* was invited to its funding contributor, the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, only several months later, after the film's global tour. Similarly, Anocha's works have never been screened at the Doha Film Institute's Ajyal Film Festival, despite its contribution to a financial grant. It is possible that the collaboration between film festivals might lead them to view such films and their funding as shared resources. All the major events on Anocha's transnational route have transcontinental connections with one another, albeit often temporary. Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund (HBF) dispersed funds through the Busan International Film Festival's Asian Project Market between 1999 and 2002, and through Hong Kong Asian Film Financing (HAF) in 2005 and 2006. HAF also allocated funding from Locarno International Film Festival in 2009 and from the Paris Project from 2010 to 2013. The world premieres of *By the Time It Gets Dark* and *Krabi, 2562* both took place at the Locarno Film Festival, which announced in August 2019 a partnership called the Open Doors-Rotterdam Lab Award in Locarno, the winner of which was invited to networking events in Rotterdam.⁶¹⁵ But there are limits to this collaborative mindset. To some extent, Anocha's film festival circuit has been mapped out by a so-called 'loose

⁶¹⁴ Wong, p.145.

⁶¹⁵ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'IFFR at Locarno 2019', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2019 <<https://iffr.com/en/blog/iffr-at-locarno-2019>> [accessed 30 September 2019].

network,⁶¹⁶ which has developed as a 'casual networking condition,'⁶¹⁷ rather than a systematic paradigm. In this network, festivals typically engage with one another as competitors rather than collaborators and organize themselves around individuals rather than institutional-organizational communication.⁶¹⁸ Film festivals are both dependent on and competitive with one another, 'a constantly contested system of institutions and people' within the larger political, cultural and economic context of cinema at both local and global levels.⁶¹⁹

We should rethink our notions of film festivals as producers. No producer would invest without the expectation of a financial return. Film festivals employ such methods only to respond to the changing natures of cultural and film industries. They have several reasons for supporting a film with no expectation of a financial return. Firstly, they want to present themselves as the patrons of world cinema, as indicated by the Berlin International Film Festival's support to Apichatpong discussed in Chapter 2. In some cases, festivals need to attract film people to their events and to maintain their 'supply.' Applying Michael Porter's management theory of the value chain, Dina Iordanova argues that festivals have a requirement for films at a certain time and 'a regular supply chain.'⁶²⁰ As the competition is fierce, film festivals pre-acquire films before they have gone into production to ensure their programming slots will be filled with premiere screenings of works by recognised and promising names. The demands of these supply chains have resulted in a hierarchy of integration whereby each festival will try to associate itself with certain directors, positioning themselves as a cultural producer of those filmmakers' films. Their roles, I argue, mirror any other form of cultural sponsorship, which is also a common practice in the Thai film industry, and brand logos are often visible on film posters. In Pen-ek's *Monrak Transistor* poster, for example, the logo of international beverage Red Bull is positioned alongside those of the production companies. But it is absent from the international edition of the poster where it is replaced by the sales agent Fortissimo's logo. Rami Olkkonen and Pekka Tuominen address in cultural sponsorship, a long-lasting collaboration is grounded for both parties to gain benefits, and both of the marketing-communicative, visibility-linked dimension and stakeholder relationships are manifested.⁶²¹ The

⁶¹⁶ Iordanova, *The Film Festival Circuit*, p.26.

⁶¹⁷ Wong, p.130.

⁶¹⁸ Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals*, p.2.

⁶¹⁹ Wong, p.20.

⁶²⁰ Iordanova, *The Film Festival Circuit*, p.24-25.

⁶²¹ Rami Olkkonen and Pekka Tuominen, 'Understanding Relationship Fading in Cultural Sponsorships', *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 11.1 (2006), pp.64-77 (pp.64-67) <<https://doi.org/10.1108/13563280610643561>> [accessed 11 May 2022].

benefits may be greater if the two stakeholders work in the same circle, like film festivals and filmmakers.

When it comes to the continental construction of the circuit, it is even more complicated, with both Western and Asian festivals serving as intermediaries between Asian cinema and the rest of the world. As a result, only a few Asian film festivals have become part of this network, normally depending on the festival's geography and position in the calendar. Anocha's later films, for example, have often premiered in Locarno in August, with the Asian premiere in Busan in October. By the time of the Hong Kong International Film Festival the following April, the films are already considered too old to be selected. It is not only the size of the film festivals that affects selection and invitation but also the time gap between festivals.⁶²² When Anocha's third film *Come Here* premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in March 2021, the film later joined the Hong Kong International Film Festival in April and skipped her longtime supporter the Busan International Film Festival in October. HKIFF has also seen a change of policy, with the replacement of art-house films by more mainstream works, or as Ruby Cheung puts it, the demand for a wider audience 'has forced the high-art aims of the film festival to spiral downwards while its commercialism and stronger links with the mainstream film distribution network have grown up.'⁶²³ While the BIFF has declared itself a hub of Asian cinema, the HKIFF has expanded its regional focus to be more global, with its 'Asian Vision' section becoming 'Global Vision.'⁶²⁴

Territorial geopolitics also hinders the circulation of Anocha's works in the spaces of East Asian film festivals. Although many theorists might include Thailand as a part of the East Asian region,⁶²⁵ Thai and other Southeast Asian films have often been treated as marginal to the East Asian cinema context, as I argued in the second chapter. At the Hong Kong International Film Festival's glamorous Asian Film Awards, for example, the nominations have often gone disproportionately to northeast Asian movies. The HKIFF is also known for its focus on and promotion of Chinese films – from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and 'global Chinese filmmakers'⁶²⁶ – which indirectly means giving less support to other Asian cinemas. Anocha's presence in the HKIFF's space has therefore been limited to two invitations to HAF and two film selections. *Mundane History* was an automatic entry – by virtue of

⁶²² Stringer, p.138.

⁶²³ Ruby Cheung, 'Corporatising a Film Festival: Hong Kong', in *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (see above at no.7), 99-115.

⁶²⁴ Ahn, p.75.

⁶²⁵ Davis and Yeh, 2008; Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals*, 2011.

⁶²⁶ Wong, p. 211.

being selected for HAF – to a small ‘Indie Power’ section in 2010 (not the vibrant Asian Digital competition), and *Come Here* screened in the Kaleidoscope section in 2021. Anocha’s other works went to smaller festivals in Hong Kong; for example, *By the Time It Gets Dark* to the Hong Kong Asian Film Festival’s 2017 New Talent Award, and *Breakfast Lunch Dinner* to the Hong Kong InDPanda International Short Film Festival.

The Busan International Film Festival, on the other hand, has responded to the global film circuit by employing a regionalization strategy, positioning itself as the leading showcase for Asian cinema.⁶²⁷ As such, local, regional, and global identities are all mobilized in its programming sections, as is the case with the parallel activities on which it has collaborated with Western film festivals, from the training ground Asian Film Academy (AFA) to the Asian Cinema Fund (ACF), the Asian Project Market (APM) and the Asian Film Market. These subsidiary projects, together with the work made possible by the ACF, have been seen as the BIFF’s attempts at ‘branding’ or ‘establishing a trademark.’⁶²⁸ From this perspective, questions arise as to why Anocha has chosen to focus on the International Film Festival of Rotterdam instead of the BIFF.

Asian norms themselves also affect the operation of festival circuits. Both the BIFF and HKIFF maintain relationships with many filmmakers in the region, including both commercial and alternative directors. As a result, the first-generation New Thai Cinema directors like Nonzee Nimibutr and independents like Anocha have been treated equally. One of the New Thai Cinema pioneers, Nonzee has had five projects at the APM – the most of any Thai filmmaker. The HAF project market has selected both studio and arthouse productions, exemplified in the inclusion of *Double Life of Chinatown* (Nithiwat Tharatorn) in 2012, which was produced by GTH, the most successful studio in Thailand. In developing countries like Asia, these traits of ‘favouritism,’ ‘patronage,’ or even ‘cronyism,’ have long been seen as having negative impacts on economics, politics, and workplace relationships.⁶²⁹ Judy Nadler and Miriam Schulman define favouritism as an ‘extraneous feature – membership in a favoured group, personal likes, and dislikes.’⁶³⁰ In fact, this kind of behaviour does not take place only in Asia, but is seemingly hidden within some other

⁶²⁷ Ahn, p.2.

⁶²⁸ Ahn, p.116.

⁶²⁹ Muhammad Nadeem and others, ‘Favoritism, Nepotism and Cronyism as Predictors of Job Satisfaction: Evidences from Pakistan’, *Journal of Business and Management Research*, 8 (2015), 224-228; Yann Bramoullé and Sanjeev Goyal, ‘Favoritism’, *Journal of Development Economics* 122 (2016), pp. 16-27.

⁶³⁰ Judy Nadler and Miriam Schulman, ‘Favouritism, Cronyism, and Nepotism’, *Markkula Centre for Applied Ethics*, 2006 <<https://www.scu.edu/government-ethics/resources/what-is-government-ethics/favoritism-cronyism-and-nepotism/>> [accessed 8 November 2019] (para.1 of 12).

cultures as well. We cannot deny that support for artists has often been a form of patronage, both in the West⁶³¹ and particularly in Asia, where royal patronage has long been given in the arts from Japan to China, Thailand, and elsewhere. Taking into account the film festival-director nexus, it might be argued that such interrelations conform more to favouritism or 'partial' patronage, as they are performed under an international organizational structure. Sometimes perceived negative judgments, like the rejection of a film by a selection committee, are considered difficult in Asian culture.

Iordanova suggests that film festivals in East Asia play an important role in serving 'a primarily regional demand' and help to bridge the relationship within the continent for its new 'creative clusters'⁶³² that emerge from what Davis and Yeh argue as 'new localism' and Koichi Iwabuchi associates with a 're-centring globalization.' 'New localism' is defined as a new kind of production that draws resources from specific markets and integrates the local with an important complement of 'global entertainment production.' It is 'international, yet decentralized and Asia-specific,' and it applies not only to independents but also to transnational companies, including Hollywood majors like Columbia-Asia. In choosing markets, the new localism uses genre, targeted at certain demographics, to appeal to a target audience.⁶³³ 'Re-centring globalization' is Iwabuchi's attempt to propose a new approach to looking at cultural flows under the process of globalization by exploring the strategies of Japanese media industries in penetrating into Asian markets. Together with the indigenization of western popular culture through Japanese know-how, local specificity is adopted and integrated into a new product.⁶³⁴ Here 'a variety of Asianness' is also represented,⁶³⁵ not only western or Japanese cultures. Both of these ideas are ground-breaking reconceptualisations of Asian collaboration, and are exemplified in the emergence of pan-Asian cinema during the early 2000s.

However, these conceptions, in my opinion, miss the fact that today's independent art cinema circles have not simply adapted forms of cultural cooperation used in commercial filmmaking or what can be defined as 'pan-Asian cinema.'⁶³⁶ All the above examples mostly happen among

⁶³¹ Cook, p.387.

⁶³² Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals*, pp.15-17.

⁶³³ Davis and Yeh, pp.38-39.

⁶³⁴ Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.99.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid*, p.105.

⁶³⁶ Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals*, p.16.

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popular commercial cultural circles with no need for festival supports if they are distributed in Asia. Film festivals cannot facilitate all collaborations and exchanges in Asia, with all of their varied structures and stakeholders. Intra-Asia collaboration and investment have long existed in the region without the input of film festivals, as exemplified by the pan-Asian productions of 1970s such as the Thailand-Taiwan collaboration *Khoo Kam* (The Destined Couple, 1973), and East Asia-Thailand co-productions in the last few decades, exemplifying from the collaboration of Nonzee Nimibutr and Hong Kong's Applause Pictures. The 2010s saw South Korean-Thai martial arts co-production *The Kick* (Prachya Pinkaew, 2011), starring both Korean and Thai martial arts stars, and a defunct joint venture between South Korea's CJ Entertainment and Thailand's Major Group under the label of CJ Major in the last few years. Indeed, festival networkers such as Anocha and Apichatpong have interacted with their regional counterparts much less frequently than Thailand's commercial film studios have, often preferring to collaborate with European partners instead. Anocha's perception of a need for better regional funding for art cinema has led her to establish a funding body, Purin Pictures, in collaboration with other independent filmmakers.⁶³⁷

There is also an uneven development between geography and international film culture, in which film festivals help construct the 'new core-periphery relations' between nations and regions.⁶³⁸ Programmers of minor film festivals in Asia often encounter the problem of inviting films whose makers would prefer to screen them at Western events rather than regional ones. The hierarchy of global film festivals has driven many Asian directors to choose major spaces like the Berlin, Cannes, and Venice International Film Festivals to premiere their works, rather than do so in Asia, which has led the BIFF to reframe its space as 'a platform for Asian cinema within Asia.'⁶³⁹ Thus, Iordanova's remark about film festivals, in the same way as film markets, being 'sites of opportunities that provide for intra-Asian exchange'⁶⁴⁰ does not necessarily account for filmmakers like Anocha. Although *Mundane History* premiered at BIFF in 2009 as a requirement of her post-production grant, few people recognized the film until it won a prize at the IFFR. In other words, Asian film festivals have some features that set them apart from similar processes in other parts of the world, features that derive from the aforementioned Asian traits like favouritism or patronage, or a festival's preference for certain types of films. Many contexts are also involved in the circulation of

⁶³⁷ Purin Pictures, 'About Us', *Purin Pictures*, [n.d.] < <https://www.purinpictures.org/aboutus> > (accessed 5 February 2023).

⁶³⁸ Stringer, pp.137-138.

⁶³⁹ Ahn, p. 73.

⁶⁴⁰ Iordanova, *East Asia and Film Festivals*, p.17.

specific films – from reception contexts, exhibition circumstances, interests, and agendas⁶⁴¹ – that make Anocha's case different from others.

Like Pen-ek and Apichatpong, who have Wouter Barendrecht and Simon Field respectively as what Ahn calls 'cultural intermediaries', and Iordanova 'sole-traders', Anocha has Gertjan Zuilhof, the former IFFR programmer covering Southeast Asia cinema from 1990 until 2016, and the Italian consultant Paolo Bertolin, who connects the region with Europe as a representative of the Venice International Film Festival and Locarno Film Festival. During Zuilhof's tenure with IFFR, Anocha contributed actively to the festival. By contrast, her most recent two titles, *Krabi*, 2562 and *Come Here*, premiered at Locarno and Berlin International Film Festivals respectively, after Zuilhof left IFFR. Bertolin was also the Asia Pacific advisor for the Doha Film Institute, which supported Anocha's second feature, *By the Time It Gets Dark*. According to Julian Stringer, the international film festival consultant has played an important role in 'mediating and solidifying the links between disparate cities and their film festivals.'⁶⁴² Anocha's middle persons signify a shift from what De Valck has called the 'age of the programmers' in 1970s Europe⁶⁴³ to the era of 'consultants' in contemporary Southeast Asia and elsewhere. The rise of such festival middle persons confirms the need to study the relationships between filmmakers and their mobile 'sole-traders' or 'cultural intermediaries' as one of the key elements in the operation of film festivals.⁶⁴⁴ To examine this in greater detail, the following section focuses on the relationship between Anocha and the IFFR.

4.2 Rotterdam and the construction of an auteur

the IFFR has put itself on the map of the international film festival circuit as an important and prestigious event that is specialized in what could be summarized as a 'triple-A' niche of 'art, avant-garde, and auteurs.' And where new film talent from around the globe – with a consistent focus on Asia – can be discovered.⁶⁴⁵

De Valck's remark about the IFFR's identity – the aforementioned 'triple-A' – might already signify some of the realities encompassing Anocha's works. The IFFR's staff have been concerned with 'the IFFR blood type,'⁶⁴⁶ referring to its prioritization of filmmakers as the centre of interest, no matter

⁶⁴¹ Ahn, p.10.

⁶⁴² Stringer, p.138.

⁶⁴³ De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, p.168.

⁶⁴⁴ De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, pp.46-47.

⁶⁴⁵ De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*, p.165.

⁶⁴⁶ De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, p.51.

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if the film is a short or a student film. Terms such as ‘authentic,’ ‘personal voice,’ ‘talent,’ ‘auteur,’ ‘innovative,’ ‘original,’ ‘topical,’ ‘urgent,’ and ‘local roots,’⁶⁴⁷ have been identified with these directors in the festival’s publicity. Steinhart evokes it as an observer of the new tide of world cinema.⁶⁴⁸ Anocha and her films conform to all of the above adjectives, as bespeaks the festival’s continued support of all forms of her work, from the exhibition of five shorts (*Graceland*; *Like. Real. Love*; *Overseas*; *Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner*; and *Thursday*), to three features (*Mundane History*; *By the Time It Gets Dark*; and *Krabi, 2562*), and one installation (*Coconut*). In addition to receiving filmmaking resources, Anocha has been highlighted as one of the festival’s prestige products in other ways. She has sat on IFFR juries twice, the first time for short films after her Tiger Award victory in 2010, and then for the feature film competition in 2016. To confirm her as the festival’s ‘blood type,’ she has also contributed to the festival by making a one-minute festival trailer called *Lublæ* as an interpretation of her relationship with the HBF and IFFR, and by serving as one of the mentors in an extra-festival workshop entitled ‘Raiding Africa’, held in Beijing in 2011 to stimulate the exchange of culture between Africa and China and boost the careers of African directors.⁶⁴⁹ She was also recognised as an installation artist when asked to create six installations on the theme of ‘ID: Burma Rebound’ in 2016 – something that she has rarely been recognized as outside the IFFR. Here we can see that the IFFR has constructed Anocha as one of *its* artists (emphasis original), in the ‘art historical lineage of other great masters’⁶⁵⁰ like those in other disciplines of arts, in the same way as Apichatpong. With the appearance of her third feature *Krabi, 2562* (2019), Anocha is now referred to as one of IFFR’s ‘established filmmakers, auteurs and festival veterans,’⁶⁵¹ with the film programmed in the ‘Signatures’ section.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid, p.43.

⁶⁴⁸ Steinhart, p.2

⁶⁴⁹ The festival has updated its website later and a lot of information has been removed from my original search. International Film Festival of Rotterdam, ‘Raiding Africa’, *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2011 < <https://iffr.com/en/iffr/2011/signals-raiding-africa> > [accessed 10 November 2019].

⁶⁵⁰ De Valck, Supporting Art Cinema, p.44.

⁶⁵¹ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, ‘Krabi, 2562’, *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, no date < <https://iffr.com/en/iffr/2020/films/krabi-2562> > [accessed 10 May 2022], (para.2 of 2).



Figure 4.4 Anocha with Rutger Wolfson, IFFR's artistic director

Searching the name 'Anocha Suwichakornpong' on the IFFR website, 66 results are found,⁶⁵² fewer only than the 106 hits on 'Apichatpong Weerasethakul.'⁶⁵³ These 66 links contain one interview, 12 reports in the 'tip' section, 14 stories in general information, and 39 news reports. Eighteen pieces are written in Dutch. However, two other pages are missing – one is the information about her co-directed short film *Overseas* with Wichanon Somumjarn, the other concerns her 2018 HBF Script and Project Development support for *Come Here*. In these 68 reports, Anocha is presented as a Tiger Award winner (21 times), a juror (7 times), an HBF grant recipient (3 times), and is extensively mentioned as an IFFR acquaintance. With such words as 'winner,' 'jury,' and 'funding grantee,' Anocha is associated with diverse skills and honours in such a way that she becomes a product of prestige. This kind of multifaceted relationship is asserted as of mutual benefit to both the festival and filmmaker.⁶⁵⁴ While the latter has gained prestige, the festival, according to Wong, 'takes credit and promotes a director'⁶⁵⁵ to gain more recognition by endorsing her as a jury member, which reinforces the importance of international independent cinema.

It is here that I would like to develop my argument about the mutually and bilaterally interdependent relationship between auteurs and institutions. The IFFR wishes to support some young Thai filmmakers, after its partial success in supporting Apichatpong, so that it can confirm its role in introducing talented new filmmakers, especially from Asia, to European cinephiles,⁶⁵⁶ as the festival failed to play a leading role in the global recognition of New Thai Cinema. As mentioned

⁶⁵² My search was conducted in 2019. The site is continually updated and the number may vary over time.

⁶⁵³ I also tallied the search results for Anocha's fellow Thai filmmaker Aditya Assarat, who also won the Tiger Award for his first feature and received several HBF grants. Only 30 links were discovered.

⁶⁵⁴ Falicov, *The Festival film*, p.209.

⁶⁵⁵ Wong, p.146.

⁶⁵⁶ Felicia Chan, 'The international Film Festival and the Making of a National Cinema', *Screen*, 52.2 (2011), 253-260, p.254 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjr012>> [10 June 2019]; Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, p.85.

previously, New Thai Cinema was first recognized at the 1997 Berlin International Film Festival, through Pen-ek's directorial debut *Fun Bar Karaoke*, and at the 2001 Cannes International Film Festival, through Wisit Sasanatieng's *Tears of the Black Tiger*. Even Apichatpong was not recognized as the 'blood type' of the IFFR, but of Cannes, when his directorial debut *Blissfully Yours* (2002) premiered there, despite the IFFR's role in funding his documentary debut *Mysterious Object at Noon* in 1998. The festival began to be the birthplace for new Thai filmmakers in the mid-2000s, after a string of Tiger Awards were won by Thai independent films: in 2008, Aditya Assarat's *Wonderful Town*; in 2010, Anocha's *Mundane History*; and in 2011, Sivaroj Kongsakul's *Eternity*. Among the newcomers, Anocha has arguably had the greatest potential to be the next star of Thai cinema ever since her student work *Graceland* was recognised by the Cannes International Film Festival. Anocha has been continually promoted as a directorial star in Rotterdam and elsewhere. Internally, Anocha has crossed over to all aspects of the IFFR's activities – the festival, the HBF, and the CineMart. She has gradually gained her fame and recognition in the IFFR's space. To some extent, Anocha has been constructed by the IFFR in a more paradigmatic way than it advocated for Apichatpong. He has received four HBF awards – fewer than Anocha. While Apichatpong was invited to be one of the artists in the exhibition 'Discovering the Other' in 2007, Anocha was chosen to create six installations on the theme of 'ID: Burma Rebound' in 2016. Eventually, its nurturing of 'the next Apichatpong' bore fruit when Anocha won the lucrative Prince Claus Award in 2019, three years after Apichatpong. In other words, the IFFR has tried to construct Anocha as "vrouwelijke Apichatpong" – the female Apichatpong.⁶⁵⁷

This co-branding of the filmmaker and the festival is clearly reflected on the cover of the *Mundane History* DVD released on 10 May 2010 by Filmfreak Distributie,⁶⁵⁸ a few months after the film's Tiger Award victory. Throughout the package design, both Anocha and the film are presented within the arms of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam and its Tiger Releases logo. On the front cover, the film's title and Anocha's name are encompassed by the IFFR brand name located at the top and the Tiger logo situated at the bottom of the DVD cover, superimposed over a dimly lit frame still from the film. This sense of embrace is heightened when the whole DVD package is analysed. Both logo and festival name also appear on the spine, and at the bottom of the back cover. In general, the back cover includes the typical information included on a DVD release: the film's synopsis, the director's biography, a list of crew, the ratings classification, technical specifications, and a list of

⁶⁵⁷ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'Tiger Tips van VPRO Cinema', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2017 <<https://iffrr.com/nl/blog/tiger-tips-van-vpro-cinema>> [accessed 10 September 2019].

⁶⁵⁸ Filmhuis, *Mundane History*, bok.com, [no date] <<https://www.bol.com/nl/p/mundane-history/1002004009065845/>> [accessed: 13 September 2019].

bonus materials, here consisting of an interview and shorts (without mentioning the titles). Other texts related to Anocha also highlight her identity as an emerging filmmaker (through the information 'MUNDANE HISTORY is haar speelfilmdebuut'), and her connection with global cinema institutions such as Cannes (through *Graceland*), the HBF and the Tiger Awards. The use of funding logos is considered by scholars as 'a ticket to gain access to exhibition venues and distribution channels' that spread out both within and outside the 'first-tiered' film festivals⁶⁵⁹ and 'as a marker of the film's significance' in the case of posters or DVD.⁶⁶⁰ This collection of prestigious logos – the distributor Filmfreak distributie, the cultural organization Chivos Oncdo Cultuurfonds, the Hubert Bals Fund, the IFFR, and the Tiger Awards – on the DVD cover serves to certify Anocha and her debut as representing artistic quality. The branding is more immediately important than the film or the director, hence even the titles of the shorts are omitted.

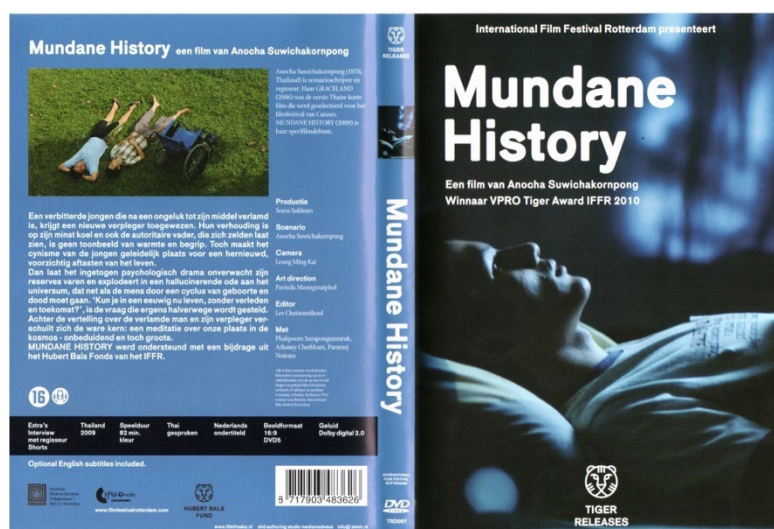


Figure 4.5 Cover design of the Dutch *Mundane History* DVD

In its publicity surrounding the film's Tiger Awards win, the IFFR also attempted to characterize Anocha's authorship as artistically mature, though she was a first-time director. Firstly, dialectical elements in her works are identified (or constructed) - from her filmmaking methods to her ideological positions. *Mundane History* is reported to show the 'philosophical and political dimension of Thai society, against the presentation of the mundane story,'⁶⁶¹ which is reflected in

⁶⁵⁹ Falicov, *The Festival Film*, p.209.

⁶⁶⁰ Miriam Ross, 'The Film Festival as Producer: Latin American Films and Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund', *Screen*, 52.2 (2011), 261-267 (p.261) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjr014>> [accessed 10 August 2020].

⁶⁶¹ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'And the Winners Are...', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2010b <<https://iffr.com/en/blog/and-the-winners-are-0>> [accessed 7 September 2019; as of 2022, although the page still exists, the content has been removed].

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the interplay of 'abstract ideas and reality.'⁶⁶² In *By the Time It Gets Dark*, the dialectical contrast can be seen from the connection of 'the earthly (fungi, commercials)' and 'the spiritual (telekinetics forces)' which guides the viewer to examine both Thailand and the medium of film through the meandering storylines.⁶⁶³ In *By the Time It Gets Dark*, the circle of life is presented in a way that embraces 'detours and thinks nothing of wandering off on a tangent, possibly never to return.'⁶⁶⁴ Anocha's dialectical thinking is underlined in an interview in which she observes that "I liked the strong contrast between the two words," referring to the title of *Mundane History*.⁶⁶⁵



Figure 4.6 *By the Time It Gets Dark*

In fact, Anocha is best known as a director with a strong commitment to socio-political cinema, rather than as a formalist. *Mundane History's* plot came to Anocha's mind at the time of the coup d'état in Thailand in 2006, leading her to question the country, its society, and the history of Thai politics. The political dimension of *Mundane History* consists in the metaphorical relationship between the personal story of a boy and the political instability in Thailand,⁶⁶⁶ making it one of the earliest movies to touch upon the state of Thai politics at that time. Anocha's political sensibility is heightened in her second feature, where she incorporates her memories into a complex story of

⁶⁶² International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'And the Winners Announced', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2010a <<https://iffr.com/en/blog/vpro-tiger-award-winners-announced>> [accessed 7 September 2019; as of 2022, the pages has been removed].

⁶⁶³ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'By the Time It Gets Dark', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2017b <<https://iffr.com/en/2017/films/by-the-time-it-gets-dark>> [accessed 7 September 2019] (para 1 of 1).

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁵ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'Pattern Recognition', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2010c <<https://iffr.com/en/blog/pattern-recognition>> [accessed 30 September 2019].

⁶⁶⁶ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, 'Interview: Anocha Suwichakornpong - Mundane History', *International Film Festival of Rotterdam*, 2010d <<https://iffr.com/en/blog/interview-anocha-suwichakornpong-mundane-history-0>> [accessed 30 September 2019].

filmmakers and the generation that experienced the massacre at Thammasat University in 1976 – the year she was born.⁶⁶⁷ *Krabi, 2562* documents the changing face of a tourist city in Krabi Province in the south of Thailand by combining co-director Ben Rivers' skills in blending documentary and fiction with Anocha's concentration on realism.⁶⁶⁸ *Come Here* is a visually experimental contemplation of death and memory featuring the memorial to the Death Railway of the Second World War as a backdrop. This critical attitude towards 'national consciousness' is elucidated by Felicia Chan as a common strategy adopted by non-European filmmakers in making their films to be more 'national' abroad than at home.⁶⁶⁹ In an interview, Tamara L. Falicov notes the preference of global south filmmakers to deal with marginalization⁶⁷⁰ in their films in order to get that recognition. The IFFR highlights this dimension of Anocha's authorship in its materials, emphasizing her ability to associate politics and film language: 'What starts as a film-within-a-film, intercutting images from Thailand's past and present, quickly expands into something more complex: a film-about-film in which the associative, poetic power of the medium is investigated and used to the full.'⁶⁷¹ In this regard, Anocha's worldview can be considered 'an authorial vantage point', 'a formal way of looking at, bracketing, and marking the depiction of a fictive world to arrive at a quasi-aesthetic-philosophical regard on the passage of life.'⁶⁷² Although Anocha is still considered a young, up and coming filmmaker, in line with the requirements of the Tiger Awards, her developed political consciousness is emphasised repeatedly.

As we see in Anocha's case, Asian and Western film festivals unintentionally compete with one another to consecrate cultural producers and their products according to their definitions of global art cinema. Anocha's authorship turns to be more acceptable in Western arenas such as the International Film Festival of Rotterdam than at Asian events like the Busan and Hong Kong International Film Festivals, where avant-garde and experimental works are judged to be of lesser importance. De Valck elucidates this practice as an outcome of what Pierre Bourdieu called the 'universe of belief.'⁶⁷³ According to Bourdieu, the judgement of art works as 'symbolic objects' cannot be evaluated only by the 'material production' but also the 'symbolic production of the

⁶⁶⁷ Electric Eel Films, *Mundane History* (English Press Kit), [Bangkok (?), 2010].

⁶⁶⁸ Electric Eel Films and Ben Rivers Ltd, 'Director's Statement', *Krabi, 2562* [n.p.].

⁶⁶⁹ Chan, p.259.

⁶⁷⁰ Michael Pattison, 'How Global South Filmmakers Find Funding Through Film Festivals in the Global North', *Filmmaker Magazine*, 2015 <<https://filmmakermagazine.com/95983-how-global-south-filmmakers-find-funding-through-film-festivals-in-the-global-north/#.YJEedpBKhnI>> [accessed 4 May 2021] (para.7 of 14).

⁶⁷¹ International Film Festival of Rotterdam, *By the Time It Gets Dark*, para. 1 of 1.

⁶⁷² Hodsdon, p.9.

⁶⁷³ De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, p.44.

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work.⁶⁷⁴ It requires a whole set of 'social mechanisms' that operate in the 'constitution of artistic field,'⁶⁷⁵ incorporating both the producers of the work and the producers of the meaning and value of the work – in this case critics, curators and film festivals. The artist does not produce the value of a work of art; instead, a 'universe of belief' is produced by agents or institutions, culminating in a 'fetish' object.⁶⁷⁶ The spectators of a work of art also need to possess what Bourdieu calls 'the aesthetic disposition and competence' which implicitly requires 'the eye of the aesthete' to appreciate the work.⁶⁷⁷ In the field, these agents not only compete with one another but also occupy different positions 'in the production of the same type of products.'⁶⁷⁸ The former concerns those with different kind of tastes; the latter refers to those occupying different positions within the same regime of taste. The universe of belief has to be produced and reproduced, embedding a long collective and individual history in the construction of artist and the exposure of audiences to the work of art.⁶⁷⁹

When taken together with Anne Jäckel's argument on European cinema as an auteur cinema, and David Andrews' reassertion of Steve Neale's institutionalization of art cinema, Bourdieu's sociological awareness of cultural production and appreciation can help us to understand Anocha's authorship-institution nexus, which has changed across time and space. As I have noted before, Neale focuses on the production aspects of institutionalized art cinema, and Jäckel also discusses auteur film as a production trend and a European film style.⁶⁸⁰ These notions, however, should be revisited, to take account of not only the production but also the exhibition and reception aspects of author cinema and art cinema. In the contemporary context, film festivals, auteur cinema and film studies are all mutually related and collectively institutionalized. In most film festivals – except some genre festivals like Udine's Far East Film Festival – certain characteristics of what Tamara L. Falicov calls a 'globalized arthouse aesthetic'⁶⁸¹ will be present, including narrative formulae, high production values, and greater access to film exhibition and distribution. In the IFFR's case, this aesthetic incorporates the triple A elements – arts, avant-garde, and auteur – with which Anocha is aligned. Andrews has also included film studies and crossover forums as new forms of institution

⁶⁷⁴ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.37.

⁶⁷⁵ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.291-292.

⁶⁷⁶ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.229.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.289.

⁶⁷⁸ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.79.

⁶⁷⁹ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.289.

⁶⁸⁰ Jäckel, p.28.

⁶⁸¹ Tamara L. Falicov, 'Film Funding Opportunities for Latin American Filmmakers', p.87.

that are often linked with art cinema and the notion of auteurship.⁶⁸² This tendency might explain why Anocha has moved back and forth between the film festival circuit, academia and visual arts residencies in the last few years, as well as relocating between Europe and the US. Keeping in mind this trajectory through what I call the auteur cinema network, I shall move on to analyse Anocha's representation in a larger context – the public reception – where she and her works have not been supported by the institutions of art cinema.

4.3 *Mundane History* and the trans/national network of para- /intertextuality

No matter how auratic and privileged the name of an auteur in the film festival milieu, once that name percolates outside this sphere into an art-house exhibition and beyond, its allure and currency can often become quite limited and precarious.⁶⁸³

Hodsdon's presupposition above indicates the realities confronted by art filmmakers when their work are shown outside the festival circuits. Alternatively, as Marijke de Valck puts it, the festival network functions as a separate zone where the auteur's films might not have to compete in the same way as commercial settings outside of the festival environment.⁶⁸⁴ So far, of Anocha's films *Mundane History* was distributed in all formats in the Benelux countries (through the IFFR's Tiger Releases), Poland (through the New Horizons International Film Festival, where the film also won an award), France (through the distributor-cum-producer Survivance) and on DVD in the UK (through Second Run). *By the Time It Gets Dark* was theatrically released in UK after it had been available through streaming and then DVD in the US, which I argue was recognized due to its entry as Thailand's representative for Academy Award's foreign category. Each market operates within a different paradigm of confrontation between the locality and transnationality, depending on pre-existing knowledge about Anocha and her movie in each territory. In here, I will examine the marketing strategies with which each distributor planned to introduce Anocha in each of their territories, by observing the paratexts of *Mundane History* DVD covers.

Applying John Ellis's concept of a film's narrative image, Simon Hobbs illustrates the two self-contradictory functions of DVD paratexts, such as the covers or posters: they can either provide a

⁶⁸² Andrews, pp.184-7.

⁶⁸³ Hodsdon, p.272.

⁶⁸⁴ De Valck, Film Festivals, p.106.

'recognisable reference point' within the viewer's existing knowledge of cinema, or create curiosity about a film that is outside that knowledge.⁶⁸⁵ The meaning and value of a film is defined, and accepted by the public, through a process of characterisation of the narrative image that takes place from the interplay between the film's 'direct publicity' and 'the public's knowledge of the film's ingredients.' Taglines, images, titles, star histories, and filmic memories, are some of the 'semiotic signifiers,' that suggest the value and meaning of a film. Nevertheless, a balance between familiarity and difference is needed to help construct an understanding of the film.⁶⁸⁶ In this process of value and meaning making, both producer and audience play significant roles in offering and interpreting the meaning of a paratext in branding a film's identity – a sort of interaction between producing and consuming cultures.⁶⁸⁷ But unlike Ellis' interest in the 'narrative image' that still depends on middle-men or gatekeepers like critics, reviewers, reporters, to connect publicists and the public, the DVD offers a direct transaction between producing cultures and consuming cultures, unmediated by any other party.⁶⁸⁸

In exploring these two cultures, I draw on Jonathan Gray's 'concepts of attachment' and 'semiotic chains,' as well as Simon Hobbs' theory of audience memory as the ground theory of my analysis. Developed from Gillian Dyer's semiotic study of advertising, 'semiotic chains,' as Jonathan Gray⁶⁸⁹ argues, are transferred and interchangeable between ads and products, and often take place between their meanings. Advertising usually aims to sell products by presenting information that will serve its selling purpose, but hide some other information that will not help it. Advertising texts therefore might not identify the true quality of a product, but instead create brand identity and a promise of, as Gray puts it, the 'product and its metaphysics.' When a product's advertising proposes something that creates some meaning, this meaning will be transferred and attached to the product. The 'semiotic chains' and the attachment of meaning certify certain qualities and value of the product. Paratexts also work in the same way, leading the audience towards potential meanings while obscuring other interpretations. An example for this is provided in Brookey and

⁶⁸⁵ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), cited in Simon Hobbs, 'Extreme Art Film: Text, Paratext and DVD' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Portsmouth, 2014), pp.48-49.

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁷ Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p.10. Ebook Central ebook.

⁶⁸⁸ John T. Caldwell, 'Prefiguring DVD Bonus Tracks: Making-ofs and Behind-the-Scenes as Historic Television Programming Strategies Prototypes', in *Film and Television After DVD*, ed. by James Bennett and Tom Brown (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), pp.149-171 (p.149-151). VitalSource Bookshelf.

⁶⁸⁹ Gray, pp.27-29.

Westerfelhaus' reading of the hidden homoerotic content in the *Fight Club* DVD.⁶⁹⁰ Gray's argument does not focus on the attachment of meaning between products under the same company and brand name, but on external signifiers of meaning such as stars.⁶⁹¹ In the case of *Mundane History*, the value and meaning are associated with the shared identity of the distributors and their products, which usually signifies arthouse and authorial signatures. Gray makes an interesting remark about the relationship between paratexts and value or meaning by stating that the value of a product is constructed by paratexts.⁶⁹² The value of painting, for example, depends on its framing and exhibition venue. One on a museum wall will never have the same value as that on a computer screen. In Anocha's case, her work is placed in a 'high-cultural position,'⁶⁹³ registered by the brand names of London-based Second Run and Paris-based Survivance.

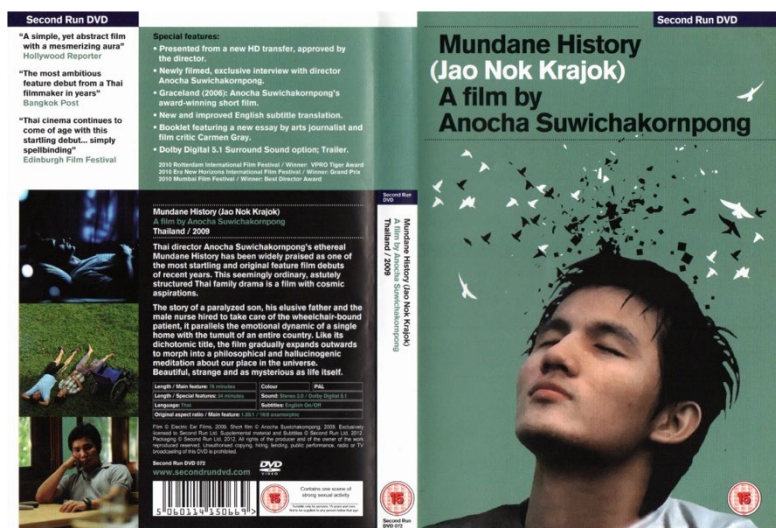


Figure 4.7 British-based Second Run's cover design of *Mundane History* DVD

The British edition uses a standard cover design common to all of Second Run's releases. The front is a movie still overlaid with the Thai and English titles, the name of director, the name of the distributor and the ratings certificate. Much the same information also appears on the spine, with the additional details of the DVD's serial number and the year of release. On the other hand, the back cover is crammed with information, ranging from the film's credits, a synopsis, technical

⁶⁹⁰ Robert Alan Brookey and Robert Westerfelhaus, 'Hiding Homoeroticism in Plain View: The *Fight Club* DVD as Digital Closet', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 19.1 (2002), 21-43 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07393180216555>> [accessed: 23 March 2022].

⁶⁹¹ Gray, p.29.

⁶⁹² Gray, p.97.

⁶⁹³ James Bennett and Tom Brown, 'The Place, Purpose, and Practice of the BFI's DVD Collection and the Academic Film Commentary', in *Film and Television After DVD* (see above at n.688), pp.116-128 (p.117)

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specifications, and the catalogue number. Unlike the Dutch edition, funding agencies' logos are not included. The film's prestige is attested to through review quotes and a citation from the Edinburgh Film Festival, and by a list of special features that specifies Anocha's work as award-winning. Under the notion of 'new' and 'technological superiority,' the special features – consisting of HD transfer, new subtitling, Dolby digital sound option, and a bonus booklet featuring text by arts journalist Carmen Gray – positions the product as what Barbara Klinger calls the 'perfect DVD movie'⁶⁹⁴ or 'hardware aesthetic.'⁶⁹⁵ This notion of the 'perfect DVD movie' has two meanings. On the one hand, it represents a perfect combination of feature film and home theatre format through high quality digital technology. On the other hand, it signifies the capacity of storage and content usually referring to DVD-typical bonus materials or extra texts – which do not necessarily relate directly to the quality of the main feature.⁶⁹⁶ However, the main work of elevating Anocha's status as a director is the standardisation of the sleeve design, through which Anocha and her work are positioned as in the same bracket as other auteurs, including Apichatpong, Pedro Costa, and Miklós Jancsó, whose films had previously been released by the distributor.⁶⁹⁷ This branding is heightened by the catalogue number, Second Run DVD 072, on the back cover, which suggests the film as part of a collection that film buffs would aim to collect in its entirety.

⁶⁹⁴ Barbara Klinger, 'The DVD Cinephile Viewing Heritages and Home Film Cultures', in *Film and Television After DVD* (see above at n.688), pp.19-44 (pp.29-31).

⁶⁹⁵ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, p.75-80.

⁶⁹⁶ Klinger, *The DVD Cinephile*, p.30

⁶⁹⁷ In Apichatpong's *Tropical Malady* DVD, the booklet essay is by film historian and author Tony Rayns, and his 1997 short *Thirdworld* is offered as a bonus item (*Tropical Malady (Sud pralad)*, Apichatpong Weerasethakul).

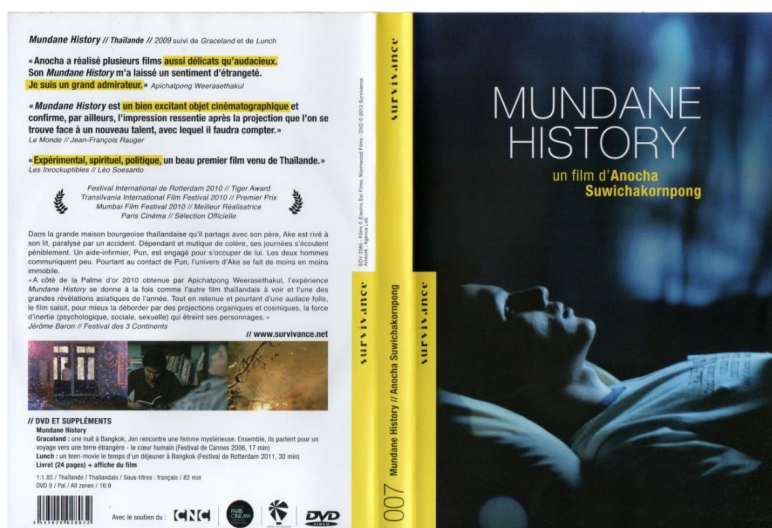


Figure 4.8 French-based Survivance's cover design of *Mundane History* DVD

In the same way, a connotation of high art is also observable on the French DVD of *Mundane History*, again through a standardized cover art format and the prominence of the catalogue number. The name of the distributor is, if anything, more prominent than the film title on the spine. As with Second Run, the front cover consists of a movie still, but this time with only the English title and the director's name superimposed. Again, *Mundane History* is legitimated as a prestigious product through its association with Survivance and its range of releases, in the same way that Second Run seeks to elevate the film through its DVD release. As per P. David Marshall, the DVD cover art serves to add value and meaning to a work by 'encircle[ing], entice[ing] and deepen[ing] the significance of the film for the audience,' not only framing its potential meaning.⁶⁹⁸

These meaning and values however can be integrated with the audience's consuming process, in which I would like to incorporate Simon Hobbs' theory of memory and audience in consuming paratexts as focal points. Drawing on John Ellis's narrative image and Derrida's theory of trace, Hobbs⁶⁹⁹ argues that the elements of a product's design – from typography, colour scheme, image, or tagline – evokes a memory within the mind of the audience. When a new product is shown, audiences recall their memory of a previous, similar feature of the design's paratexts. In the case of film, this need not only be a director's previous works, but could be anything that is recognisable to the public as defined through a 'series of semiotic signifiers' from images and words to stars. For example, some posters for the horror film *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (Craven, 1984) include

⁶⁹⁸ David P. Marshall, 'The New Intertextual Commodity', in *The New Media Book*, ed. by Dan Harries (London: British Film Institute, 2000), p. 69, cited in Gray, p.90.

⁶⁹⁹ Hobbs, p.23.

semiotic signifiers that are homages to Norman Bates' kitchen knife in *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), triggering the audience's trace memory in order to suggest how they ought to comprehend and evaluate the content and quality of the film. The design of the *Mundane History* DVD covers – serving as 'surrogate narrative images'⁷⁰⁰ – use an established visual template to codify themselves according to the memories of the potential audience. They adopt what Simon Hobbs notes as 'a pre-circulating brand identity with an established marketability,'⁷⁰¹ reminding the audience of the prestige that both Second Run and Survivance have constructed through their previous releases. In consequence, *Mundane History* is associated with the high artistic values that both companies have conveyed to their audiences for some time.

In fact, the DVD is considered to possess an 'aura of quality,' because it is superior to VHS.⁷⁰² Other scholars also advocate the DVD's superiority due to the relationship between the 'perfect DVD movie' and the theatrical experience,⁷⁰³ the advanced physical and on-screen design,⁷⁰⁴ or the aesthetic co-incident between the DVD and television.⁷⁰⁵ Jonathan Gray also finds the representation of 'artistry, aura, authenticity, and author,'⁷⁰⁶ in reading the bonus materials, the cover design, and even the discs of the *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers Platinum Series Special Extended Edition* DVD. Some other scholars, however, are dubious about this 'aura of quantity,' and attribute it to the basic economic objectives of the DVD industry.⁷⁰⁷ Paul McDonald acknowledges this co-existence only as a 'marketable myth' that is hidden in the representation of the DVD.⁷⁰⁸ In my opinion, the notion of an 'aura of quality' is problematic in itself – firstly, how we can evaluate what is regarded as 'an aura.' Can we consider that any of the *Mundane History* DVDs have as much of an aura as the *Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers Platinum* DVD, which is packaged in a stylishly designed box and contains one hour of extra footage, four full four-hour commentary tracks, thirteen documentaries with more than seven hours of material, 1,917 photographic stills,

⁷⁰⁰ Hobbs, *Extreme Art Film*, p.61.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.61

⁷⁰² Paul McDonald, *Video and DVD Industries* (London: BFI Publishing, 2007), p.61, cited in James Bennett and Tom Brown, 'Introduction: Past the Boundaries of "New" and "Old" Media: Film and Television After DVD', in *Film and Television After DVD* (see above at n.688), pp.1-18 (p.3).

⁷⁰³ Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex*, p.77.

⁷⁰⁴ Bennett and Brown, *Introduction Past the Boundaries*, p.4.

⁷⁰⁵ James Walters, 'Repeat Viewings: Television Analysis in the DVD Age', in *Film and Television After DVD* (see above at n.688), pp.64-80 (pp.65-66).

⁷⁰⁶ Gray, p.104.

⁷⁰⁷ Bennett and Brown, *Introduction: Past the Boundaries*, p.5.

⁷⁰⁸ Paul McDonald, p.61, cited in James Bennett and Tom Brown, *Introduction: Past the Boundaries of New and Old Media* (see above at n.688), p.3.

interactive split-screen map, and audio-based features.⁷⁰⁹ The *Mundane History* DVDs, on the other hand, include only a few extra shorts, booklets, and interviews.

DVDs – especially on arts cinema - often tackle the notion of ‘authorial intention,’ as we can see from the US-based Criterion Collection,⁷¹⁰ or in the case of Anocha, it is embraced with the UK-based Second Run and France-based Survivance. Many other scholars also point out similar interrelation between authorship and DVD. Barbara Klinger notes the ‘awareness’ of auteurism and its intertextual reference in the DVD discourse, notably in supplementary materials such as the director’s cut and the director’s commentary, signify the presence of the filmmaker’s creative control.⁷¹¹ John T. Caldwell likens DVD supplementary materials such as bonus tracks to electronic press kits in connecting viewers without passing through ‘an intermediate cultural handler.’ These materials function ‘institutionally and industrially,’ and can be categorized into two types: firstly, those aimed at canonizing films or series by signifying the ‘control, virtuosity, authenticity and cultural influence’ of an auteur; and secondly those aimed at ‘direct rhetorical or physical interaction with other parties.’⁷¹²

DVDs are central to the changing paradigm of auteurism, involving sociological and economic discourses. Catherine Grant notes the functional role of DVDs as ‘Auteur Machines’ – a term she borrows from Barbara Klinger – in defining the changing forms of auteurism, which are more diverse and comprehensive than its earlier paradigm. They are a part of the process of the ‘actual “production” of auteurs.’⁷¹³ The director’s commentaries on the DVD of Mike Figgis’ *Timecode* (2000), for example, ‘turn their authorized, documented, and intimate stories of the filmmaking process itself into a product.’ In this way, the movie is ‘re-direct[ed]’ and becomes ‘a documentary performance of the “drama of the movie’s source.”’⁷¹⁴ Given this artistic dimension, DVD commentaries are often exploited by distributors as a means of ‘monetization’, i.e. to increase sales, exploiting the director’s authorship as part of the promotional discourse.⁷¹⁵ Furthermore, the DVD also manifests a dialogue of plurality involving a diverse group of agents from the director and

⁷⁰⁹ Gray, p.91.

⁷¹⁰ For more details, read Dru Jeffries, ‘Owning Kubrick: The Criterion Collection and the Ghost in the Auteur Machine,’ *Cinergie*, 6.2 (2017), 31-40.

⁷¹¹ Klinger, *The DVD Cinephile*, p.39.

⁷¹² Caldwell, *Prefiguring DVD*, pp.161-163.

⁷¹³ Grant, p.103.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.112.

⁷¹⁵ Jeffries, p.32.

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other creative participants who orient the film to the viewer making a variety of consumption choices.⁷¹⁶ In the case of genres and films, DVDs are strongly interconnected with promotional materials.⁷¹⁷

The notion of authorial intention is also manifested in the cover art of the *Mundane History* DVDs, but complicated by the discourses that have produced each of them. In addition to the institutional branding of the distributors, Anocha's authorship is defined by the connection with national organizations such as the British Film Institute, the media, and the intertextuality with transnational auteurs like Apichatpong and Polish artist Andrzej Klimowski (see below). In her study of the interrelation between Japanese anime fans, DVDs and the film text, Laurie Cubbison suggests the plurality of the text as it moves between producers who change it according to each territory and its audiences. Using Roland Barthes's observation of the distinction between 'the work' – 'a fragment of substance, that occupies a part of the space of books and is seeable' – and 'the text' – 'a methodological field or a process of demonstration'⁷¹⁸ – Cubbison concludes that the DVD is 'the work,' and 'the program contained on the DVD is the text.'⁷¹⁹ Although 'the text' in her study is more related to the film text – mainly the dubs and the subtitles – it can be related to the paratextual reading surrounding the *Mundane History* DVDs. The consumption experience of the text shifts as it moves between languages, in the same way as the paratexts of the DVD covers. Klinger discusses the diversity of interpretation of a text that is viewed through a multiplicity of media, aesthetics, and audiences. For example, a film can be interpreted differently if it is watched in a theatre, at home or in a public auditorium. Contemporary readings of texts are associated with a diversity of technology – such as 'visual, aural, electronic, and digital,' or media platforms like 'television, home theatre, cinema and the computer,'⁷²⁰ as well as 'a community of readers or viewers.'⁷²¹ In Anocha's case, the meaning of her DVDs depends on surrounding factors, varying from society, culture, industry, producers and audience.

⁷¹⁶ Deborah Parker and Mark Parker, 'Directors and DVD Commentary: The Specifics of Intention', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62.1 (Winter 2004), 13-22 (p.14).

⁷¹⁷ Brookey and Westerfelhaous, p.39.

⁷¹⁸ Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp.155-64 (p.157).

⁷¹⁹ Laurie Cubbison, 'Anime Fans, DVDs, and the Authentic Text', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 56 (Fall 2005), 45-57 (pp.45-46) <<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/the-velvet-light-trap/v056/56.1cubbison.html>> [accessed 4 March 2022].

⁷²⁰ Klinger, *The DVD Cinephile*, p.42.

⁷²¹ Parker and Parker, p.16.

In the British edition, Anocha's authorship is presented in relation to novelty and 'hardware aesthetic' – a new HD transfer, a newly filmed interview, a new and improved English subtitle translation, a new essay, sound options – which can be comparable to other previous release of established directors such as Apichatpong. She is prestigious enough to provide an exclusive interview to be used as a DVD supplement. She is also a director who has received several awards for works interesting enough to be analysed by leading critics (hence the review quotes). All of this information denotes her creativity and craftsmanship. In other words, *Mundane History* asserts Anocha's authorial potential, signified through the convergence of youth and novelty. In the French edition, her youth is emphasized on Survivance's website. Anocha and *Mundane History* are presented as 'à un nouveau talent' (a new talent),⁷²² 'un beau premier film venu de Thaïlande' (a beautiful first movie from Thailand),⁷²³ and 'se donne à la fois comme l'autre film thaïlandais à voir et l'une des grandes révélations asiatiques de l'année' (as the other Thai film to see and one of the great Asian revelations of the year).⁷²⁴ What is interesting here is the evaluation of *Mundane History* in a broader context – from the art film circle to the boundary of Thailand and Asia. From these promotional tools, we start to see her cinematic potential, which audiences are encouraged to experience and digest by watching the film(s) so evidently appreciated by the institutions of French cinema culture.

In fact, novelty and youth have long been key aspects of the art cinema network of emerging film cultures, discussed in various periods and many countries exemplifying from the rise of many new waves in the world. Both Second Run and Survivance were emerging film distributors at the time they started to distribute Thai cinema – Second Run in 2005 and Survivance in 2010 – as had been the leading lights of film production, development, sales, and distribution during the 1990s, such as Fortissimo Films, Wild Bunch, and Celluloid Dreams.⁷²⁵ All of the international agencies that have

⁷²² The full quote of *Les Inrockuptibles'* Léo Soesanto reads '*Mundane History* est un bien excitant objet cinématographique. MH confirme, par ailleurs, l'impression, ressentie après la projection, que l'on se trouve face à un nouveau talent, avec lequel il faudra compter.' (Mundane History subtly deconstructs the plot chronology, intertwined images registers, mingles intimacy with cosmic in the way of a very exciting cinematic object. MH also confirms the impression, felt after the screening that we are facing a new talent we should consider) source: Survivance, 007 Mundane History, *Survivance* (Meudon: Survivance, n.d.) <<https://www.survivance.net/document/58/72/Mundane-History>> [accessed 10 January 2019] (para. press and writings.).

⁷²³ The full cite says, 'Expérimental, spirituel, politique, un beau premier film venu de Thaïlande.' (Experimental, spiritual, political, a beautiful first movie from Thailand), Ibid.

⁷²⁴ Festival des 3 Continents' Jérôme Baron says, 'Along with the Golden Palm won by Apichatpong Weerasethakul in 2010 *Mundane History*, whose modest title could be confusing (mundane means trivial, banal), is the other essential Thai film, and one of the major Asian revelations of the year.' Ibid.

⁷²⁵ De Valck, *Supporting Art Cinema*, p.46.

collaborated with Anocha had just emerged by the time of their deals. In addition to *Mundane History*, *By the Time It Gets Dark* has been distributed by the French distributor Luxbox, which was established in 2015, just several months before the film premiered at the Locarno Film Festival. The Beijing-based outfit Rediance was founded in 2017, shortly before being involved with the sales of *Krabi*, *2562* in 2019 and *Come Here* in 2021. According to Jon Hopewell, this is not a new phenomenon.⁷²⁶ In fact, all of the sales agents that have collaborated with Thai independent directors were emerging sales company at the time of their business deals. Apichatpong's key sales agent, The Match Factory, was founded in 2006 and distributed *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* in 2010. Paris-based Memento Films was launched in 2006 and shortly afterwards distributed another emerging independent work from Thailand, *Wonderful Town* (Aditya Assarat, 2007), Rotterdam's 2008 Tiger Award winner. But the discontinuity of some of these relationships needs to be investigated, especially in comparison to those organisations that have continuously supported Pen-ek and Apichatpong.

Anocha's institutional authorship is also characterized by the interrelation between these distributors and national bodies like the BFI. Only *Mundane History* – aside from Apichatpong's works – is listed on the BFI website – under the Second Run's brands. On that film's French DVD release, the semiotic chains reference a number of influential national and international sources, from Apichatpong to critics, festivals, and cinema institutions. On the *Survivance*'s DVD back cover, Apichatpong's quote is cited, saying 'Anocha directed several movies as delicate as audacious. Her *Mundane History* gave me a feeling of strangeness. I'm a great admirer.'⁷²⁷ The design also incorporates contributions by members of the media and a festival programmer, and further references to awards. The back cover features a list of festivals where the film won awards – framed by two Palme d'Or-like logos – namely Rotterdam, Transilvania, Mumbai IFF, and, interestingly, the 'Paris Cinema' International Film Festival, in which the movie was merely officially selected. Below this are logos of French institutions such as the CNC, the Paris Cinema International Film Festival, and the Festival des 3 Continents. CNC stands for Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image), an agency of the French Ministry of Culture,

⁷²⁶ Jon Hopewell, 'Locarno: Luxbox Acquires Golden Leopard Contender 'By the Time It Gets Dark' (Exclusive)', *Variety*, 27 July 2016 <<https://variety.com/2016/film/festivals/locarno-luxbox-golden-leopard-by-the-time-it-gets-dark-1201824412/>> [accessed 26 February 2019] (para.7 of 8).

⁷²⁷ The quote was written in French as 'Anocha a réalisé plusieurs films aussi délicats qu'audacieux. Son *Mundane History* m'a laissé un sentiment d'étrangeté. Je suis un grand admirateur.' *Survivance*, (para. press and writings).

despite its unclear direct involvement. Through this design, *Mundane History* is associated with French cinematic prestige.



Figure 4.9 Polish-based cover design of *Mundane History* DVD

In the Polish edition, the authorial reference is switched to the paratext drawn by poster designer Andrzej Klimowski, a transnational and trans-medial London-based artist. On the cover, little text appears against the white background - the Polish and Thai titles, the name of director, and the festival's Polish name '10 mff nowe horyzonty.' The back cover is also filled with little information - only the Polish and English titles, a barely legible credits lists, the Polish name of New Horizons International Film Festival, *Stowarzyszenie Nowe Horyzonty*, and technical specifications. Amidst the minimal information against the plain white background, Klimowski's illustration – spanning almost half of both cover space – stands out most in drawing the audience's interest, rather than the name of Anocha, the film's title, or the name of the festival. Klimowski is not only an internationally acclaimed artist but also a pioneering auteur of the Polish School of Posters – a term coined by foreign critics to define a group of designers who emerged at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts during the 1960s and 1970s. During a period of relative freedom of interpretation and artistic expression, these artists were hired by the Ministry of Culture and the Arts to design posters to promote films. Klimowski's design lends certain qualities to *Mundane History*. Firstly, it creates a connection between Anocha and world-class auteurs such as Alfred Hitchcock, Jim Jarmusch, Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese, whose works were also illustrated by Klimowski over the

years. Furthermore, Klimowski's freshness and boldness in the Polish context,⁷²⁸ is indirectly transferred to *Mundane History*, especially with the fact that both Klimowski and Anocha share certain experiences, both in terms of transnationality and transmediality. Klimowski has worked both in poster art and cinema, in pop art and high art, and in London and Poland; Anocha in film and installation art, and in Thailand, Europe and America. The Polish DVD paratext shares little information about *Mundane History*, offering no synopsis or tagline to indicate what the film is about. Instead, the design bridges the gap between an unknown director and a little-known film culture (Thailand) and Poland. In this context, it is not the film that sells the DVD, but Klimowski's status as an eminent Polish artist. The value here does not derive from the film, Anocha – whose name does not appear on the spine, unlike the UK and French DVDs – or *New Horizons*, but from the name of Klimowski.

This trans/national encounter surrounding the Polish paratext shows the complicated process of reading a paratext. It means nothing if the DVD is released in Thailand or France. It signifies a text and its meaning-making process – in this case, the producer and audience. According to Gray,⁷²⁹ 'texts not only talk back to and revise other texts, either implicitly or explicitly,' but also 'call us to connect their meanings to previous texts,' and the 'frames offered by other texts.' These are examples of intertextuality – either random or intentional – inevitable transactions between texts that provide additional meaning, which can restrict the meaning that we read or lead us to interpret as the producer wants. Intertext and paratext are always parts of the text. Considering *Mundane History's* DVD cover, it can be argued that the nexus of intertexts and paratexts builds up a trans/national network of para-/intertextuality through the institutionalization of film festivals, media, distributors and what I define as 'the network of transnational auteurs.' Within the present paradigm of transnationalism, it is more viable to argue that the text of the DVD's cover – or 'the work' in Roland Barthes' term – is 'plural.' It is a 'passage, an overcrossing,' and it answers to 'an explosion, a dissemination,'⁷³⁰ in this case the dialogues of transnationalism.

⁷²⁸ Playwright Harold Pinter praises him as 'leading the field by a very long furlong, out on his own, making his own weather.' Owen Vince, 'Andrzej Klimowski: the Master of the Polish Poster School on His Dark and Lurid Vision of Cinema', *The Calvert Journal*, 2018
<<https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/9806/polish-poster-andrzej-klimowski>> [accessed 10 August 2019] (para.8 of 17).

⁷²⁹ Gray, p.31-34.

⁷³⁰ Barthes, p.159.



4.10 *Krabi*, 2562 shared the same distributor as Apichatpong

This para/intertextual network of transnational authorship is heightened by the connection to Apichatpong, in some other media platforms beyond the DVDs. In the French release, Apichatpong is mentioned twice – alongside his quote and in that of Jérôme Baron of Festival des 3 Continents, who praises Anocha as his equal.⁷³¹ *Mundane History* is the only Thai film that has been distributed by Second Run and Survivance after Apichatpong. Before *Mundane History*, Survivance had distributed only Apichatpong's *Syndromes and A Century* (catalogue number 1) while Second Run has released his *Blissfully Yours* (catalogue number 13) and *Tropical Malady* (number 34). On Second Run's website, a Village Voice critic compares her as 'striking ...reminiscent of fellow Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasethakul,'⁷³² while Carmen Gray – the bonus booklet writer – notes that 'Comparisons between Suwichakornpong and Weerasethakul were always going to be inevitable, given her compatriot's towering influence over the Thai independent film scene.'⁷³³ On the BFI's website, Anocha's page is always accompanied by the 'Award-winning DVD/Blu-rays' slogan that was linked to Apichatpong's works.⁷³⁴ Anocha and *Mundane History* intersect with the authorial and institutional intertextuality surrounding Apichatpong. Both have shared the same distributors – from DVD distributors Second Run and Survivance, to Beijing-based production and

⁷³¹ The full quote reads 'A côté de la Palme d'or 2010 obtenue par Apichatpong Weerasethakul, l'expérience *Mundane History* se donne à la fois comme l'autre film thaïlandais à voir et l'une des grandes révélations asiatiques de l'année. Tout en retenue et pourtant d'une audace folle, le film saisit, pour mieux la déborder par des projections organiques et cosmiques, la force d'inertie (psychologique, sociale, sexuelle) qui étirent ses personnages.' This can be translated as 'Besides the 2010 Palme d'Or obtained by Apichatpong Weerasethakul, the *Mundane History* experience is given both as the other Thai film to see and one of the great Asian revelations of the year yet.' Survivance, (para. press and writings.).

⁷³² SecondRun, *Mundane History (Jao nok krajok)*, [n.d.] <https://www.secondrundvd.com/release_mundane.html> [accessed 10 November 2019] (under 'Appreciation').

⁷³³ Ibid., para.3 of 3.

⁷³⁴ As of 2022 the website has been redesigned and this link removed.

sales agent Rediance, who distributed Anocha's documentary *Krabi, 2562* and *Come Here*, having previously co-produced Apichatpong's first film with an international cast, *Memoria* (2021).

This kind of transnational authorial interreferentiality is interpreted by Patricia White as the (voluntary) rewriting of prestige festivals' discourses of world cinema that is often advocated in the production discourse concerning female directors – in her case Samira Makhmalbaf. In using her own 'nepotism and fraternité', referring to the association with her father Mohsen Makhmalbaf, Samira can open 'new mappings of gender and transnational representation' in female and Iranian cinema.⁷³⁵ The linkages between Anocha and Apichatpong, however, have been interchangeably constructed by other stakeholders in her filmmaking networks – the distributors, film festival programmers and critics – and this, I argue, is not the case only with Anocha, but also with many other independent Thai filmmakers who seek to follow Apichatpong and his route into transnational filmmaking. Regarded as an icon of independent cinema, he, and his filmmaking practice, continue to inspire and influence many other young filmmakers in Thailand.⁷³⁶ The Cannes International Film Festival's selection in 2018 of the dystopian portmanteau film *Ten Years Thailand*, in which Apichatpong directed one of the four segments, provided an opportunity for two younger co-directors, Aditya Assarat and Chulayarnon Siriphol, to have their work shown at Cannes for the first time. (The fourth director of *Ten Years Thailand*, Wisit Sasanatieng, had already made his debut at Cannes in 2001.) On the other hand, this kind of patronage repeats the old Southeast Asian custom where female directors have been granted opportunities through social connections and the privileges accorded by social class and education.⁷³⁷ Like many female politicians in the region, female directors often entered the film industry through their fathers, brothers, or husbands. The practice – however – had two side effects. Many talented female filmmakers were involved only as producers of films directed by their husbands or brothers, rather than as directors themselves. During the 1980s and 1990s, some female directors were able to start directing immediately after completing their formal film education, such as the late Philippine new waver Marilou Diaz-Abaya, Malaysian filmmaker Shuhaimi Baba and Thai independent Ing K, facilitated by their upper-middle-class backgrounds. As was the case at the birth of cinema in the region, only expats or members of the privileged classes could access the medium, which was considered an

⁷³⁵ White, p.66.

⁷³⁶ Yuangyuan Wang, p.11.

⁷³⁷ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'Moving Up – Women Directors and South-east Asian Cinema', *Celluloid Ceiling: Women Film Directors Breaking Through* (London: Supernova Books, 2014), pp.160-178 (p.161).

expensive undertaking here.⁷³⁸ Prior to Anocha, directors who started their filmmaking journeys outside the film industry also followed this trend.⁷³⁹ By the time she started her own journey, digital filmmaking and domestic film education had boomed and had created more chances for women from less privileged stratas of society.⁷⁴⁰ With her strong – in Bourdieu’s terminology – ‘cultural capital’ (from Columbia University education), ‘economic capital’ (from her family’s jewellery business), and a glimpse of ‘symbolic capital’ (her graduation film *Graceland* being selected to screen at Cannes), Anocha was able to enter the global art cinema field and be recognized at the same level as many other female filmmakers like Samira Makhmalbaf or Lucretia Martel.

Anocha’s institutional and aesthetic connections might have helped quickly enshrine her as an auteur and gain her symbolic capital – a variation on the trajectory of earlier generations in their domestic contexts. But her artistic development might arguably be hindered, the shadow of Apichatpong obstructing her recognition as an autonomous auteur. Secondly, the relative absence of gender politics that are often present in the films of many female directors has made it difficult for Anocha to get the full benefit from feminist networks such as women’s film festivals. As White notes, despite the decline of feminist activism in this contemporary post-feminist era, several feminist legacies – material, political, and aesthetic – still exist in many female directors’ works, such as those of Lucretia Martel or Samira Makhmalbaf.⁷⁴¹ Other female filmmakers might try to present these in the form of ‘network narratives’ – referring to ‘open structures in women’s film texts that link to feminist and related cultural networks’ such as film festivals,⁷⁴² exemplified by the global attention drawn to anti-polygamist feminism in Indonesian Nia Dinata’s *Love for Share* (2006), or to the lesbian community in Taiwanese director Zero Chou’s works. At first look, Anocha’s works seem not play on feminist politics, seen in the equal significance of male and female roles, and the absence of active female characters at home. The sense of femininity is limited in her works

⁷³⁸ The revival of Indonesian cinema at the turn of the century – after the collapse in the mid-1990s - was initiated by some leading female filmmakers who finished their education oversea – such as Mira Lesmana, Nia Achnas or Nia Dinata.

⁷³⁹ Beside Ing K, other senior female filmmakers before Anocha incorporated Mingmongkol Sonakul (*Isan Special*, 2003), the daughter of former governor of Bank of Thailand, or Sasithorn Ariyavicha (*Birth of the Seanema*, 2003) who has graduated from New York’s The New School.

⁷⁴⁰ For more details about women’s filmmaking in Southeast Asia and South Korea, please read my two essays, which were concluded from my research residencies in South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines during 2002 – 2008 through the supports by Ford Foundation, Japan Foundation and Nippon Foundation, accordingly. Anchalee Chaiworaporn, ‘Moving Up: Women Directors and Southeast Asian Cinema’, pp.160-178; and ‘Women Filmmaker of South Korea’, pp.203-209.

⁷⁴¹ White, p.44.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, p.134.

by the absence of mother figures or by women tending to be shown away from their traditional locations. In *Mundane History*, only one woman has a role – as a maid – in a male-dominated house that is suffused with the pain and suffering of the family members. There is no trace of a mother. In later works, women are equally represented but they are most of the time away from home – in a rented country house, the jungle, or a battlefield in *By the Time It Gets Dark*, in a tourist town in *Krabi, 2562*, and then at a site of memory and pain in *Come Here*. In other words, the home – representing Thailand – is afflicted with problems due to the lack or absence of mothers or women generally.

In our search for home – as Vijay Agnew puts it – our past and our memories influence and even construct the way in which we perceive our present, and thus construct an important part of our identities.⁷⁴³ Anocha's political consciousness of Thai society has long been intensified in her mind and then in her work – from the military dictatorship in the early 2000s that inspired her to make *Mundane History*, her long consideration of the aftermath of the 6 October 1976 violence that fed into *By the Time It Gets Dark*, the failure of tourism development in *Krabi, 2562*, and the blurredness of existing representations of World War II in *Come Here*. Thailand's socio-politics are always represented as mystic, obscure, and shattered through the metaphor of 'home' in her works. Home, according to Anke Patzelt, 'is an important vessel for one's sense of belonging. It describes not only the place, but also other more abstract categories of where one belongs.'⁷⁴⁴ This association between Anocha and Thailand can be explained in terms of how Osamu Nishitani defines an individual construction of his 'place of origin.'⁷⁴⁵ For that scholar, the human being is not born in Heimat – the place of origin – but "born by forming his place of birth as himself," thus creating a kind of organic entity of self and space.' Instead of positing Thailand as a place for tribute, as Apichatpong's works do, or a place of longing, as in Pen-ek's earlier works,⁷⁴⁶ Anocha politicizes contemporary Thailand as a place of suffering through the form of regularity and repetitions in *Mundane History*, and as a land of torn history through the use of broken narratives in *By the Time*

⁷⁴³ Vijay Agnew, *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity. A Search for Home* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p.3 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442673878>> (accessed: 26 Jan. 2023).

⁷⁴⁴ Anke Patzelt, "Notions of Home and Belonging for Alteinwanderer and Neueinwanderer in the German-Speaking Community in Ottawa," in *Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging*, edited by Florian Klager, and Klaous Stierstorfer (De Gruyter Inc., 2015), pp.183-205 (p.187). ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁷⁴⁵ Osamu Nishitani, *Fushi no wandarando* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996), p.230, cited in Andreas Niehaus and Tine Walravens', 'Home Work: Post-Fukushima Constructions of Furusato by Japanese Nationals Living in Belgium', in *Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging*, ed. by Florian Klager and Klaus Stierstorfer (De Gruyter Inc., 2015), pp.123-145 (p.131).

⁷⁴⁶ Anchalee Chaiworaporn, 'Home, Nostalgia, and Memory: The Remedy of Identity Crisis in New Thai Cinema,' *Asian Cinema*, 17:1 (2006), 108-123.

It Gets Dark, the encounter between realism and fantasy in *Krabi, 2562*, and the encounter with the obscurity of history in *Come Here*. She always carries Thailand with her wherever she goes, despite the fact that she has spent much of her life abroad and has moved to the US and Germany since 2018. It appears these concerns and experiences will be exemplified again in her next project, *ASR*, that focuses on the three Siamese kingdoms: Ayuthaya, Sukhothai, and Rattanakosin, through the eyes of ordinary women.⁷⁴⁷ By making her movies, Anocha 'let[s] the origin return within the present, to make the present a repetition of the past and by that recreate the union with one's origin. The present has to get its depth through one's origin, one's Heimat.'⁷⁴⁸ In other words, Thailand has been feminized through the portrayal of absence. This might be a new trend of global feminist legacies in the post-feminism era which needs to be further explored in the contemporary climate of feminist development. The invisibility of active women might be identified with a strong call for feminism – something that needs to be filled up. Furthermore, her institutional dependence, I argue, often takes place with the present so-called the 'global generation.'

4.4 The Global Generation

In the clash between the old and new generations, the intellectual supremacy of one generational elite is believed to supplant that of the declining previous generation.⁷⁴⁹ This paradox has challenged film industries across the world at least since the French New Wave in the 1960s, which also inspired a series of new waves across Europe, South America and Asia, such as the British New Wave, the Czech New Wave, the New German Cinema, Yugoslavian's Novi Film, Brazil's Cinema Novo, and the Japanese New Wave. Often new generations of filmmakers were identified with some other cinematic contexts that enriched their filmmaking processes, seen in the case of the birth of Thailand's 'Social-Critique Cinema' in the 1970s, which was influenced by Italian Neorealism. James Tweedie notes that the emergence of cinematic new waves, where international venue for films and some other forms of assistance were offered for the cinematic developments outside Hollywood, took place in the 1960s, the 1980s, and the 1990s.⁷⁵⁰ Enhanced by globalization and digital technology, the latest resurgence of art cinema has engendered several forms of new

⁷⁴⁷ The Rockefeller Foundation, 'The People and Ideas of Bellagio: Anocha Suwichakornpong', *The Rockefeller Foundation*, [n.d.] <<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/the-people-and-ideas-of-bellagio/anocha-suwichakornpong/>> [accessed 26 January 2023].

⁷⁴⁸ Niehaus and Walravens, p.131.

⁷⁴⁹ José Ortega y Gasset, 'La Idea de Las Generaciones', *Obras completas*, 3 (1917-1925) (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 2005), 561-565, cited in Manuel Palacio, Juan Carlos Ibañez and Lerau Bret, p.30.

⁷⁵⁰ James Tweedie, *The Age of New Waves: Art Cinema and the Staging of Globalization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.2.

cinema across the world, from one industry to another. The 1990s American school of filmmaking, which Jeffrey Sconce called 'smart cinema,' stands between the Hollywood mainstream, European art cinema, and independent low-budget movies, reflecting 'a predilection for irony, black humour, fatalism, relativism and, nihilism.'⁷⁵¹ In Europe, the Danish Dogme 95 is known for its set of rules safeguarding the purity of filmmaking, while Spanish 'Nuevo Cine Español,' 'Los *novísimos*,' or Otro Cine Español,⁷⁵² came to the fore in the mid-2000s through media attention and engagement with international agencies. In Asia, a number of new waves emerged, starting with China's Fifth Generation in the mid-1980s, followed by New Iranian Cinema in the early 1990s, New Korean Cinema, and New Thai Cinema in the late 1990s, as mentioned in the introduction chapter.

New Thai Cinema is mostly known in terms of a group of filmmakers who moved in the late 1990s from advertising backgrounds into the film industry, which at that time incorporated both commercial and arthouse styles. By contrast, taking into consideration their local and global encounters, Anocha's generation of filmmakers are better identified as independent directors – although this elusive term is hard to define in the Thai context. 'Indy' in Thailand generally refers to a mindset that crosses the boundaries between high and low culture, elite and pop, folk and fashion, past and future. Their identities are heterogenous, ranging from upper and lower middle class, provincial migrants, foreigners and just 'curious'⁷⁵³ – referring to those who try to find the meaning of the term. They prefer to give a modern style to local things, rather than seeking foreignness or cutting-edge tech. In the Thai film context, it is spelled differently by using 'indie' or 'independent,' and usually is associated with the concept of 'novelty' or 'young.' As a result, many scholars also include the reputable icons of New Thai Cinema who worked for Thai studios, like Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Nonzee Nimibutr, or Wisit Sasanatieng, as 'indie'.⁷⁵⁴ Based on their aesthetics and 'Do-It-Yourself' practice, the Thai 'indie' is presented by Sudarat Musikawong, one of the first film theorists who tried to define the term in 2007, as the group of filmmakers who prioritize aesthetics and tell the stories of modern Thai subjects and issues.⁷⁵⁵ Writing in 2013, and drawing on John Lent's three entities that affect the construction of the independent – government regulation, mainstream studio systems, and traditional methods of filmmaking, Natalie Boehler elaborates the

⁷⁵¹ Jeffrey Sconce, 'Irony, Nihilism and the New American 'Smart' Film', *Screen*, 43.4 (2002), 349-369, pp.351-352.

⁷⁵² Palacio and Ibañez, p. 29.

⁷⁵³ Philip Cormwel-Smith, *Very Thai Everyday Popular Culture* (Bangkok: River Books, 2005), p.249.

⁷⁵⁴ Baumgärtel, 2012; Sudarat Musikawong, 2007; Takayuki Akiba, 'The Emergence and Development of Thai Contemporary Arts and Artists: A Case Study of Thai Independent Cinema' (unpublished master degree thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 2007).

⁷⁵⁵ Sudarat Musikawong, p.258.

term ‘independence’ in a collective sense of ‘Southeast Asian Independent Cinema’ that touches upon the subject of politics, economical and industrial integration, as well as ‘aesthetics and narration.’⁷⁵⁶ In her contemporary conception, the notion of independence is redefined as:

...aligning itself with institutions offering contributions, and negotiating the transnational positioning that this entails. It also raises the question of current hegemonies and new power centres that are not located in a geographically determined space, but are delocalized, such as transnational funding institutions, the politics of major film festivals, and the influence of critics and academic institutions.⁷⁵⁷

Boehler’s argument relies on western-grounded theories as it addresses the influence of 1990s American independents and Dogme 95 on Thai filmmakers. Political ideologies such as Third cinema, postcolonialism and anti-imperialism are invoked to explain the cinemas in this region, which sometimes are beside the point. Perhaps what is right about Southeast Asian Independent Cinema is the notion of its transcendence beyond national boundaries and its leap to the global level. But we still cannot identify the aesthetics of Southeast Asian independent cinema in the regional context. Even in Thailand, the term is problematized as north-eastern indie filmmakers have also succeeded in making movies, claiming their peripheral identities. As I suggest in the introduction to this thesis, this group of Thai independent filmmakers should be called Thai arthouse independents instead.

In my opinion, ‘Thai arts indie’ is better explained as what Michael Z. Newman calls ‘a cinematic and cultural category,’ that is, a group who challenge and criticize mass culture, and advocate alternatives.⁷⁵⁸ Their cultural tastes might be seen as those of the social elite, as Newman notes, but, thinking collectively in Thai film culture, their mode of address is full of variety, ranging from grassroots documentaries to experimental features. From his research on Apichatpong’s works, Wang Yuangyuan invokes cultural concerns to explain that the independent trend develops from a kind of ‘self-expression (or self-promotion),’ indulging in social commentaries for the urban young generation.⁷⁵⁹ This cross-boundary practice of filmmaking incorporates other forms of visual arts (mostly digital forms) into indie culture. To some extent, both perspectives seem to correspond to

⁷⁵⁶ Natalie Boehler, ‘De-Locating “Independence” The Discourse on Southeast Asian Independent Cinema and Its Trajectories’, *Cinema & Cie*, 3.20 (Spring 2013), 41-52, p.44.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.48.

⁷⁵⁸ Michael Z. Newman, ‘Indie Culture: In Pursuit of the Authentic Autonomous Alternative’, *Cinema Journal*, 48.3 (2009), 16-34, p.17 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20484466>> [12 July 2022].

⁷⁵⁹ Yuangyuan Wang, p.39.

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Anocha's filmmaking practices. All of her works are told in an anti-narrative structure with a strong political message, and portrayed from the viewpoint of the educated middle class – from the son of a domineering father in *Mundane History*, to former student activists and a sympathetic filmmaker (*By the Time It Gets Dark*), a movie location scout (*Krabi, 2562*), and a group of friends (*Come Here*). But there are also many grassroots stories that are told by this indie generation, including by Apichatpong or Uruphong Raksasad (*Agarian Utopia*, 2009; *The Songs of Rice*, 2014). I prefer to advocate the definition provided by Mingmongkol Sonakul, a Thai independent filmmaker of the early 2000s, who describes 'indie' as a 'conceptual branding' - more like 'a flavour, a style, and a brand.'⁷⁶⁰ It does not align with existing categories already understood by audiences. Such filmmakers work outside the Thai film industry by depending on international modes of filmmaking to tell their stories in non-mainstream, non-traditional ways. Only Apichatpong has a degree of support from the film industry, as well as from the film festival circuits. Apichatpong's influence can be found in the works of many contemporary independent directors, both in theme and style, such as the combination of documentary and experimental forms, 'slow and atmospheric'⁷⁶¹ portrayals of everyday lives, the reflections of personal memories, or political allusions. But there are also many who try to use different approaches.

This generation of filmmakers is an example of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim call 'global generations', who 'depend on the global dynamics such as production and markets, media and advertising, migration and tourism.'⁷⁶² Global generations need to be analysed from a cosmopolitan perspective that prioritizes the convergence and interaction between national and international, local and global signification, influences and developments. This is reflected in Anocha's works, which are the product of transnational modes of practice, rather than depending on local filmmaking traditions. Using the concept of global generations, we can see that Anocha and her fellow directors who began filmmaking at the same time have followed the same route, in terms of the allocation of funds, dependence on festivals, and the reach of a worldwide audience. But when we try to pin down this generation, in the same way as the earlier New Thai Cinema filmmakers, this seems to be more difficult. They are often referred to as a part of New Thai Cinema,

⁷⁶⁰ Sudarat Musikawong, p.251.

⁷⁶¹ Yuangyuan Wang, p.39.

⁷⁶² Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 'Global Generations and the Trap of Methodological Nationalism for a Cosmopolitan Turn in the Sociology of Youth and Generation', *European Sociological Review*, 25.1 (2009), 25-36, p.25-26.

which continues to be used so many years later. But their filmmaking styles are highly diverse. Many of



Figure 4.11 Thai art assemblages: *Wonderful Town* (top left), *Mary Is Happy Mary Is Happy* (top right), *Agarian Utopia* (bottom left), *By the River* (bottom right)

them use experimental narratives, from Anocha and Aditya Assarat (*Wonderful Town*, 2008; *Hi-So*, 2011) to the documentarists Uruphong Raksasad. Some use typical arthouse narratives, like Sivaroj Kongsakul (*Eternity*, 2011). They remain what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim call 'the mosaic pieces that cannot be fitted together to make a unified picture.'⁷⁶³ Chris Berry, however, explains this kind of mosaic system in terms of 'the logic of assemblage,' which should be elaborated in order to understand 'an operatic logic behind the superficially amorphous, chaotic and ever-changing characteristics of transnational cultural formations.'⁷⁶⁴ Based on Aihwa Ong's concept of an assemblage as a 'contingent ensemble of diverse practices,' and Manuel DeLanda's view on it as 'heterogenous and contingent,' the assemblage consists of the mixing of diverse values and visions that operate on 'the relations of interiority,' for the overall structure of the system in order to make new connections amongst different groups of actors. Put simply, in the case of East Asian culture,

⁷⁶³ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, p.34.

⁷⁶⁴ Chris Berry, 'Transnational Culture in East Asia and the Logic of Assemblage', *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 41.5 (2013), 453-470, p.468 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23654795>> [accessed 8 May 2022].

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Berry incorporates both the flexible, profit-oriented cultural productions such as the Korean Wave, the Asian blockbuster film, and the low-budget filmmaking of, for example, Chinese director Jia Zhangke, as some elements of the assemblage. Each of these have their own characteristics, making each of them heterogeneous. But they all operate under the overall structure of East Asian transnational culture. By using Berry's logic of assemblage, the Thai indie art cinema and Anocha can be identified as a generation that has progressed into the global art cinema circuit, despite their diverse filmmaking styles. In fact, they share certain traits with other new wave movements such as the Other Spanish Cinema⁷⁶⁵ (and even with their advertising director predecessors). Each of those directors also has a particular style and uniqueness but nevertheless is considered as part of a generation of auteurs active in the latest Spanish film movement.

To respond to this, I would like to reassess José Ortega y Gasset's concept of one generation's supremacy over the predecessor, and Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' in assessing this contradictory movement of a global generation. Ortega's suggested replacement of an older generation by a new generation seems not to describe what has taken place in Thailand. While we accept that the first generation of New Thai Cinema has been less active recently, senior global auteurs like Pen-ek still work in parallel with the more recent global generation. There is no clash between them as the new generation remains less recognized than their predecessors. Secondly, Anocha's global visibility is still restricted to middle-range festival circuits, whose audiences cannot easily be evaluated numerically. Her transnational journey still operates among an 'imagined community' whose participants include audiences, filmmakers, sales agents and distributors who come together temporarily and in relatively small numbers at film festivals and art houses. Viewers may watch Anocha's films at their nearest festival, but we do not know where other fans of her films are located. They imagine 'distant human beings and become part of one's own experiences.'⁷⁶⁶ While Benedict Anderson evokes the imagined community in terms of the nation, this group of directors construct their 'imagined community' beyond national borders, through international film festival and art cinema circuits. As a global generation, they should be understood collectively since their movement has utilised the same networked global mode of filmmaking – film financing, distribution, and exhibition – to create arthouse cinema that can reach audiences throughout the world.

⁷⁶⁵ Palacio and Ibañez, p. 29.

⁷⁶⁶ Dina Iordanova, 'Mediating Diaspora: Film Festivals and 'Imagined Communities'', in *Film Festival Yearbook 2: Film Festivals and Imagined Communities*, ed. by Dina Iordanova and Cheung (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2010), 12-44, p.13.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed another category of cinematic authorship to be found in contemporary global art cinema, exemplified by Anocha Suwichakornpong. As an emerging filmmaker, Anocha's global rise has been shaped less by personal creativity alone than by complex processes in the creation of authorship. Deriving initially from European and American contexts, the notion of art cinema as an institutional mode of practice, first proposed by Steve Neale and developed later by David Andrews, has more recently been expanded to incorporate the cinemas of lesser-known cultures like Thailand, and Asia, Africa, and Latin America more generally. The 'institutional apparatus'⁷⁶⁷ of art cinema consists not only of festival circuits, but also of arthouse distribution chains, and 'the network of transnational auteurs.' Anocha has benefited from changes in these environments of arthouse cinema, which are strongly associated with author cinema. The support arising from these institutions and environments might engender the emergence of young auteurs more easily than in the past, but their authorship seems to be hidden under the paradigm of 'institutional author,' or 'extratextual authorial agency' as the foundation of 'intertext-based authorship.'⁷⁶⁸

Through film festivals, Anocha has learnt industrial practices – funding, producing, exhibition and distribution – from day one. This study suggests the mutual and bilateral interdependence between the director and the institutions. During the first decade of her career, Anocha established her network by choosing middle-ground film festivals, specifically the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, Locarno Film Festival, and Paris Project. Her trajectory confirms Julian Stringer's observation of the political inequality between film festivals: 'some festivals within the circuit are more dispensable than others, some worth the decision to attend, others not worth investing time and money in.'⁷⁶⁹ This fact signifies the political circumstances and the mobilization process facing filmmakers in the construction of their film festival circuits. In this dialogic relationship, filmmakers can be seen as active stakeholders in the circuits, not passive as has normally been assumed before.

The geopolitical relationships between Asia and Europe – such as cultural norms and each festival's orientation – has also forced Anocha to be more selective in her festival preferences. Her first feature, *Mundane History*, was better received in Europe than at the Busan International Film

⁷⁶⁷ Tzioumakis, p.66.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.60-1.

⁷⁶⁹ Stringer, p.137.

Festival, where it premiered. This observation corresponds to what Ran Ma calls the reconfiguration of the 'international film festival network' so that we can 'theorize and contextualize festival networking and scale-making at the local, national, and regional levels,' as she argues not all festivals 'necessarily conform to the "universal" neoliberal paradigm.'⁷⁷⁰ In this way, some film festivals might attempt to be more distinctive than others, as in the case of the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, so that they can maintain their status as a 'fundamental institution,' which stands in the contradiction to commercial cinema because its marketability is constructed by 'aesthetic rituals that testify to its purity.'⁷⁷¹

Outside the festival circuit, Anocha remains almost unknown, leading her into associations with the network of arthouse institutions in each country – the media, distributors, cultural organizations, and the network of transnational auteurs. These institutions follow what Simon Hobbs⁷⁷² posits as the four key elements of art film paratextuality in sustaining its status of high culture: authorial branding, national branding, critical legitimization, and the significance of the festival circuit. The name of the director can become 'a loaded signifier' that brings with it a series of different memories and traces that signify diverse meanings to guide and affect the consumption choices of the audience. National branding refers to a collection of prestigious works or a recollection of previous achievements, normally through the rise of cinematic waves and movements. Critical legitimization means the media acknowledgement that helps art cinema to maintain its position as high culture. The significance of film festivals is directly related to Anocha's works through their extensive festival coverage, awards and critical buzz. Anocha and *Mundane History* were certainly supported by all of the above elements, but in an unequal mode of address, depending on each country in which the film was released. In branding Anocha and *Mundane History* as examples of authorship, the French and British DVD covers focus on critical notices and the involvement of institutional powerhouses; these are ignored by the DVD distributors in Poland and Rotterdam. Some other elements – like the network of transnational auteurs, including Apichatpong – have also assisted her consecration into the international arthouse community. The intertextuality and paratextuality that invokes global arthouse icons in the promotional materials might be considered another strategy in the institutionalization of global art cinema, especially in the emergence of young directors.

⁷⁷⁰ Ma, p.61.

⁷⁷¹ Andrews, p.181.

⁷⁷² Hobbs, *Cultivating Extreme Art Cinema*, pp.27-31.

All of the above examples surrounding Anocha's filmmaking trajectory show the growing significance of the discourses of a niche film culture, as I argue, due to the changing circumstances of today's global creative generation, which 'depend[s] on the global dynamics such as production and markets, media and advertising, migration and tourism,'⁷⁷³ as much as the construction of their audiences through their textual authorship or intentions. Bourdieu's concept of the power of consecration is well justified here in explaining the global rise of this generation. Artists are consecrated through the 'collective belief in the game' – defined by Bourdieu as 'the illusio,' or in the 'sacred value of its stake.' This belief is produced through the collective labour of agents in the artistic field who actively circulate in the network of relations. Their interactions can be identified from the exchanges between the artists – between the old masters and the newcomers, as clearly represented by the relationship between Apichatpong and Anocha and her contemporaries. We can also see these operations taking place between artists and patrons, and between artists and critics. Through all of these processes of consecration, the artists can register their works as 'sacred objects' with their signatures or brand-names. In the art for art's sake group, such alliances and exchanges are common between supporters who are connected to one another through the relations of mutual collaboration and sympathy.⁷⁷⁴

Since 2018, Anocha has moved into academia and visual arts to help give new impetus to her career. *Krabi, 2562* was less dependent on film festivals than her two earlier films. Some new supporters came from organizations in UK and US that are linked to Ben Rivers and to her residency at Harvard University. In addition to the global crowdfunding from Indiegogo website, where 122 people contributed to the film, *Krabi, 2562* was co-produced with Anti-Worlds, a new UK distribution Company established in 2019, becoming the company's first co-production. In the US, the film received assistance from the Film Study Center at Harvard University, the private California-based LEF Moving Image Fund, as well as the Boston-based Centre for Independent Documentary. Other contributors included the Paris-based 4A4 Productions and Bangkok's V.S. Service. But when she comes to make a movie on her own, film festivals are still the main resource, as seen from her film *Come Here's* supporters, varying from the Hubert Bals Fund (Script and Development Fund), Tokyo Filmex Film Festival's Next Masters Support Program, Talent Tokyo, and Switzerland's Visions Sud Est Fund. She has also moved out of the IFFR's loop by premiering *Come Here* at the Berlin International Film Festival's International Forum of Young Cinema, during another of her

⁷⁷³ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, pp.25-26.

⁷⁷⁴ Bourdieu, *The Rule of Art*, p.230.

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residencies. Shifts in her trajectory will become more evident in time as continues her changing course.

Although many findings here might seem to correspond with existing knowledge of the institutionalization of global art cinema, this study tries to update the discussion within the contemporary context where processes of globalization have spread all over the world. We find that the network of global arts cinema nowadays does not accentuate only the production side, as argued by Neale, or the modes of distribution and exhibition like film festival circuits, arthouse theatres or crossover forums, as elaborated by Andrews. Here, the arthouse distribution chains, the network of transnational auteurs, and some particular national connections such as the media, film institutes or even other artists, as seen in the Polish paratexts, are all new constituents in the institutional apparatus of arts cinema. Policymakers in Southeast Asia can apply some of this knowledge to implement policies for art cinema support, instead of following only the practices that have often used by film festivals. For the academic circle, these new discoveries might be considered as additional complements of producing global arts cinema and can be further developed in theoretical debates. The political differences between eastern and western principles and practices should also be considered to provide the best justification of these policies so that the best practices can be constructed to develop the film culture in the region.

The notions of the network of transnational authorship, the distinction between European and Asian values, as well the changing discourses surrounding the 'global generation', all trigger new academic debates on authorship. We may have to integrate this kind of approaches in studying Asian film festivals – such practices as favouritism, the equality given to both popular and arts cinema, and the inequality between different regions within Asia itself. Expanding to the global level, we should also rethink about the growing study of paratextuality, which indicates variations according to territory, culminating in a trans/national network of para/intertextuality. We also find some linkages between novelty and the global generation in the contemporary criticism of global arts cinema. Last but not least, Anocha's hidden messages on the absence of mothers/active women also suggest new debates on the changing paradigm of post-feminism in the future. Her co-independence of global authors like Apichatpong also triggers some debates on the nepotism and fraternity that often take place between the rise of women's directors and their male supporters in the global art circle.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The jury was split on Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Tropical Malady*, but those who championed the Thai film 'were so articulate in their passion that even those who didn't love it loved giving it an award.'

Quentin Tarantino⁷⁷⁵

Tarantino's above comment was made to the press in 2004 after Apichatpong Weerasethakul's Cannes Jury Prize was awarded to him for his third feature, *Tropical Malady*. But in effect, this was one of the first official acknowledgements by a world-renowned director of Thai cinema being among the top venues of global cinema. From that moment, Thai cinema became recognised as an equal among wider Asian Cinema, a legacy that neighbouring countries like Japan, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan had long ago achieved. This was a big leap for the once unknown film culture; a decade before when I first visited the festival in 1995, only a few Thai buyers were in attendance. This binary contrast – the authorial supremacy of Apichatpong and the jury members' passion addressed by Tarantino – signifies some of the textual and contextual influences that have shaped the rise of Thai global art cinema. Thai art cinema, I argue, has found international success not through individual genius alone, but also due to these other contextual factors. In this thesis, I examined the emergence of three directors as exemplars of such factors – the New Thai Cinema pioneer Pen-ek Ratanaruang, the independent crusader Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and the Thai female director Anocha Suwichakornpong.

In order to disentangle the factors surrounding the global rise of Thai film culture and the effects impinging on the authorship of Thai art cinema, I employed several approaches in this study. Due to the domestic and global transformation in the last two decades, the authorial construction of Thai filmmakers has also been affected by these changes. It has distinctively grown from the locally oriented industry in which all filmmaking processes are dependent on the studios, towards regional and global modes of production, distribution and exhibition. Domestically, new-generation filmmakers – varying from the advertising directors and the independent arthouse filmmakers – started to enter the Thai film industry and offered a diversity of works, involving both popular and avant-garde cinema, replacing the popularity of teen-targeted and B-grade works in the earlier

⁷⁷⁵ Tim Gray, 'Tarantino Sez '9/11' Won on the Merits', *Variety*, 23 May 2004
 <<https://variety.com/2004/film/markets-festivals/tarantino-sez-9-11-won-on-the-merits-1117905451/>>
 [accessed 9 December 2020] (para 7 of 10).

periods. Thai cinema has grown from a 'small nation cinema'⁷⁷⁶ oriented at local consumption to a combination 'small cinemas'⁷⁷⁷ across diverse categories, targeting both domestic and international audiences. With its diversity of audiences and their locations that I used as a basis for analysis, I argue that contemporary Thai cinema can be categorized according to two large groups of audiences: the movies favoured by a wider range of audiences, which can be furthered classified as global cinema, Asian regional cinema, mass cinema; and those for specific audience groups like international art cinema, urban cinema, provincial cinema, and 'special interest cinema'. This study focuses on the Thai international art cinema which has utilised both domestic and international modes of production, distribution and exhibition for the first time in the long history of Thai cinema. By extending its limited audience in one country to the global territory, it can be defined as *transnational small cinema* in all modes of film practice. In this study, I investigated how these directors situate their practice in the Thai and international contexts. What are the global factors that facilitate the rise of these filmmakers? And how is their authorship affected by social and industrial change? The methodology in my study can be divided into several approaches of binary contrasts; that is, text and context, empirical and theoretical examination, east and west arguments, 'historicity and ahistoricity',⁷⁷⁸ 'geography and geopolitics', and local and global. As a result, John Caldwell's 'integrated cultural-industrial analyses' is a relevant framework, whereby I used my previous journalistic and research experience in Thai and Asian cinema over the past decades for their theoretical support or argument. As the rise of Thai cinema has spanned the last two decades, Galt and Schoonover's historicity and ahistoricity approaches helped me to study the complexity of the formation of art cinema in the Asian region, after the initial attempt by Wouter Barendrecht during the rise of pan-Asian cinema. In this context, geopolitical differences are also beneficial towards understanding the contexts of art cinema in the region and how they contrast with Western contexts. Last but not least, production studies theory is embraced as a foundational argument so that the filmmaking trajectories of the directors are prioritized, rather than the contexts alone.

The global rise of the three directors examined in this study and their construction of authorship has been undeniably affected by numerous transitional changes in both the local and international film industries. Pierre Bourdieu calls it a common practice that facilitates a newcomer to achieve through external changes, although they might 'bring with them [their own] dispositions and

⁷⁷⁶ Hjort and Petrie, pp.1-33.

⁷⁷⁷ Giukin, Falkowska, and Dessler, vii-xxiv.

⁷⁷⁸ Galt and Schoonover, pp.12-15.

position-takings which [are able to] clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field.⁷⁷⁹ This transformation was caused by many cultural phenomena in Europe and the world since the 1990s, varying from the rise of European co-productions and distribution in the global film markets for niche films;⁷⁸⁰ the construction of cultural promotional programs by national, regional and global bodies such as the Council of Europe; and the expansion of film festivals as a site of production, distribution and exhibition. This was matched by the expansion of pan-Asian co-productions in Asia like South Korea and Thailand, in addition to the Japanese co-productions of several Chinese-speaking projects historically.⁷⁸¹ Within Thailand, changes have also been triggered by the emergence of both filmmakers and audiences, the reformation of the Culture Ministry in 2002, the enactment of the 2008 Film and Video Act, long-growing political tensions, and the growth of digitalisation and globalisation. Peter Wollen also addresses the interrelation between the change in the canon and the change in production, in which ‘another ‘revolution of the canon depends on another revolution in filmmaking’.⁷⁸² As the movement has continued for more than two decades, it is reasonable to examine how the authorial signatures of these three directors have been distinctively complicated by these contexts. In the Thai case, the authorship can be summarised across three directions - collaborative authorship, post-interstitial authorship and intertext-based authorship - or the global generation of authorship.

In chapter 2, I explored the characteristics of collaborative authorship that have been built up by New Thai Cinema pioneer Pen-ek Ratanaruang with his crews, particularly those who hold the positions of heads of department. The post-Fordist ‘flexibly organized set of practices’⁷⁸³ in Pen-ek’s filmmaking journey combines the film policies of studio and independent companies in the local, regional and global film paradigms in achieving his international reputation – varying in scale from the local cinema, to the pan-Asian network, and finally to the European co-production model. The more he is recognised as a global author, the more he has had to rely on the external factors that support Asian directors to reach the international recognition. Bourdieu explains the production process as ‘the field of cultural production’ which cannot ‘make reputation’⁷⁸⁴ for any particular person or institution, but instead is ‘the whole set of what are sometimes called ‘personalities of the world of arts and letters.’ This field of cultural production is introduced as ‘the

⁷⁷⁹ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.57.

⁷⁸⁰ De Valck, *Film Festivals*, Bourdieu, p.79.

⁷⁸¹ Davis and Yeh, p.89.

⁷⁸² Peter Wollen, *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London: Verson, 2002), p.218.

⁷⁸³ Janet Harbord, *Film Culture*, cited in Sarah Atkinson, p.22.

⁷⁸⁴ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.78.

system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated.' As a pioneer of New Thai Cinema when the industrial support of global art cinema was still under development, Pen-ek had not consistently been consecrated by one particular agent or institution like film festivals in the same way that Apichatpong and Anocha had been canonised by Cannes International Film Festival and the International Film Festival of Rotterdam respectively. Although Pen-ek's films premiered in all major film festivals including Berlin, Cannes and Venice, the festivals had still maintained their major roles as exhibition and promotional sites in order to assist him to reach global audience, rather than being involved with the process of funding and distribution, perhaps due to the limited number of available international grants before the start of the 21st century. More importantly, very few local producers were knowledgeable and had enough experience to connect their local counterparts with the international film professionals at the time. Most of the industrial support for global art cinema emerged everywhere after the 2000s, through training, funding and co-productions. As a result, Pen-ek's global filmmaking route had to rely on different levels of agents and institutions to help him.

In such a field of transnational restricted production, the role of international coordinators – identified as 'sole trader'⁷⁸⁵ and 'cultural intermediary'⁷⁸⁶ – is significant in bringing the previously unknown Thai film culture to the world. Bourdieu's concept of the field of cultural production explains how agents and institutions struggle to monopolise the power to consecrate producers; though in this case it is a global author. Cultural producers also consist of other stakeholders surrounding the directors in both local and international contexts. In Pen-ek's case, these stakeholders were Fortissimo's Wouter Barendrecht and Raymond Phathanavirangoon, while Simon Fields, Cannes International Film Festival and Apichatpong himself were the key elements in Apichatpong's global success. The International Film Festival of Rotterdam and some other facilitators such as DVD distributors, as well as Apichatpong himself are some of the keys to Anocha's global recognition. Due to the limited opportunities of international filmmaking resources for global auteurs during the early 2000s, international film producers like Barendrecht had more of an impact on Pen-ek's construction of global authorship than those who have handled Apichatpong's producing job, especially considering the fact that the director needed someone to produce his works. Barendrecht had used a set of associations - consisting of talent sharing, co-

⁷⁸⁵ Jordanova, 'East Asia and Film Festivals, p.12.

⁷⁸⁶ Ahn, p.109.

producer and distributor reputations, senses of novelty and pan-Asian aesthetics – to brand Pen-ek as a pan-Asian author, instead of emphasising the director's lone creativity.

In this discourse of 'practices of branding,'⁷⁸⁷ the collaborative authorship that was constructed by the director with his advertising fellows was interrupted by cinematic 'noises'⁷⁸⁸ or 'little authorial personalities.'⁷⁸⁹ Originally, collaborative authorship was built up from his long collaboration with above-the-line crew who have also worked with him since his directing of television commercials, featuring a sort of 'sufficient control.'⁷⁹⁰ In this mode of production, he proposed not only his personal ideas but also the use of other talents. His pan-Asian works were increasingly built up within the framework of multiple authorship, through Barendrecht's branding strategies and Doyle's 'pan-sensory' aesthetics.⁷⁹¹ Pen-ek became a 'constructed author,' rather than the author in the romantic sense.

Apichatpong's ultimate success is maintained by the fluidity of capital that he has earned and developed throughout his filmmaking career. As the richest of the directors by capital – cultural, social and symbolic capital – he is the first to target new positions, the conception that Bourdieu⁷⁹² advocates to develop in all fields, even in economy and sciences. The new positions here I define as the top status of global art cinema and creative masterpiece. Although the directors studied here occupy all of Bourdieu's forms of capitals, Apichatpong stands out more than the others do in terms of cultural hybridity and artistic supremacy. Through his educational and cultural background in the interim space between Thailand's poorest hometown in the Northeast and the modern capital of Bangkok, and between the impoverished artistic development in Thailand and the fruitful avant-garde arts scenes in Chicago, Apichatpong applies his lifetime experience as his resources in the making of a 'cinema of post-interstices', which I justify through Hamid Naficy's notion on the interstitial mode of production. A post-interstitial filmmaker shares the same approaches with an interstitial director in seeking funds from various public and private sources, but he has no need to focus on making movies on the themes of migration, diaspora, and identity. In Apichatpong's case, his works manifest the convergence between Eastern and Western themes, urban and rural divides, high and low culture, cinematic and other visual arts forms. The Thai pop culture and provincial

⁷⁸⁷ Hadas, p.48.

⁷⁸⁸ Wollen, *Signs and Meaning*, p.85.

⁷⁸⁹ Tybjerg, p.44.

⁷⁹⁰ Gaut, *A Philosophy of Cinematic Art*, pp.110-114.

⁷⁹¹ Hillenbrand, pp.150-1.

⁷⁹² Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.262.

ways of life which he experienced throughout his life in Thailand are transformed into the language of European and American avant-garde tradition which he learned about at the Art Institute of Chicago. His earlier works typically manifested the strong structure of binary contrasts between two things, events, or spaces, and the split of times, before shifting towards forms of multiple oppositions. Arguably, this model of interstices interrogates the question of purity which is often found in avant-garde works. In Apichatpong's context, I argue, the dialogue of purity turns into a complex issue that brings in a new model of avant-garde cinema and authorship. Employing Barrett Hodsdon's definition of the association between filmmaker's eyes, cinema apparatus, visual field and representation's scheme,⁷⁹³ his personal projection can be considered as a pure perception, expressed within the mode of hybridity – from discursive territories, culture, cinematic and artistic forms.

To maintain his complex filmmaking style, Apichatpong has used various approaches in scouting and securing funding, spanning from a 'homemade' filmmaking style, emotional capital from friends and other filmmakers and artists, Anne Jäckel's European's 'variegated film industries',⁷⁹⁴ and the American-originated 'distributed financing'.⁷⁹⁵ Apichatpong's economic capital has come from public funds, small-scale production companies that circulated in the early 2000s, and global television as well as visual arts disciplines. In other words, Apichatpong's financial resources come from everywhere from Europe to Asia, the US to South America. As a result, financial risks are distributed among multiple partners and public institutions. Apichatpong acts out as Dina Iornadova's sole trader or Ahn's cultural intermediary, operating by himself so that he can maintain his own creative parts without the interference of other producers. This mode of global co-production enables Apichatpong to situate himself at the centre in all of his projects from producing to creativity, especially with the co-production scheme beyond Europe and the US. Placing Apichatpong's status within the space of contemporary transnational network of restricted production, Bourdieu's concept of the field of power should be re-examined with regard to the role of dominant power-takings, as he notes:

The field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural). It is the site of struggles between holders of different powers (or kinds of capital) which have at stake the transformation or conservation of the relative value of different

⁷⁹³ Hodsdon, p.3.

⁷⁹⁴ Jäckel, p.25.

⁷⁹⁵ Brabham, p.39.

kinds of capital, which itself determines, at any moment, the forces liable to be engaged in these struggles.⁷⁹⁶

In Apichatpong's case, the power of economic capital in his projects is distributed extensively to several stakeholders across the world in such a way that few agents or institutions can achieve economic domination over them. Each has only received such small profits that no stakeholder can control the projects. Power over other sources of capital is also shared between several agents or institutions, among which Cannes International Film Festival takes precedence as the top auteur-oriented film festival. But other major film festivals like Berlin, Venice or Rotterdam have also joined the share, albeit equally. In conclusion, it can be argued that the majority of his supporters come from his 'democratic network' in all modes of filmmaking – from financing, producing, exhibition or promotion, including visual arts.

Walking into the global art cinema circle at the right time, a few years after Apichatpong, Anocha's independent trajectory was enriched by numerous supportive activities through the commercialisation of film festivals and the success of independent filmmaking and niche films. Unlike Pen-ek who learned filmmaking by practice and made films through collaboration with professional producers, and Apichatpong who experimented with seeking funds and was assisted by Simon Field, Anocha has been consecrated by film festivals in all professional modes of filmmaking. By the time she started her career in the late 2000s, numerous supportive activities were already in place both locally and internationally for young filmmakers: from producing, through the training of project pitching; funding, through grants and co-production schemes; exhibition, through film premieres; and distribution, through film festival circuits. This system facilitated Anocha with entering the global art film industry more directly and speedily than her senior directors, by producing the projects herself in the same way as Apichatpong. It is her sole traders or cultural intermediaries – in particular the International Film Festival of Rotterdam's programmer Gertjan Zuilhof, and freelance consultant Paolo Bertolin – that have connected her with the film festival circuits, rather than any other industrial contexts.

Bourdieu's critical discussion on the competition between agents and institutions in consecrating an author in the field of cultural production is not well justified here when it applies to newcomers. Without industrial supporters, Anocha had rarely been known outside the film festival circuits in the same way as Pen-ek and Apichatpong, who had been fully supported by professional producers

⁷⁹⁶ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.215.

and, most importantly, international sales agents. All Pen-ek's works were distributed by Fortissimo Film Sales, except *Headshot* and *Samui Song* which were handled by two French agents, Momento and Urban Distribution International, respectively. Similarly, Apichatpong's works were officially distributed by several agents, such as Paris-based Why Not Productions for *Blissfully Yours*, Fortissimo Film Sales for *Syndromes and a Century*, and Cologne-based The Match Factory for his subsequent works. But Anocha's works could only premier to film festival circuits and institutes with a connection to Apichatpong. So far *Mundane History* had general releases in the Netherlands and Poland by the International Film Festival of Rotterdam and New Horizons International Film Festival, where the film won prizes, together with one all format releases in France and DVD release in England. *By the Time It Gets Dark* was theatrically released in UK after it was available and released in DVD in US, due to its entry as Thailand's representative for Academy Award's foreign category. Beyond that, it is Apichatpong's connection that has promoted her works, such as through England's DVD distributor Second Run and France's Survivance, or China-based international sales agent Radiance. It can be argued that Anocha's industrial opportunities are co-branded with the institutions of art cinema: firstly with film festivals, later with film distributors, as well as the connection with other successful auteurs – especially Apichatpong. Due to the diversity of her supporters, the route of her global status has been developed into fragmentation. This might propel us to rethink about Bourdieu's notion of consecration and the roles of institutions and agents who do it. It can be argued that the power of stakeholder and his consistency will affect the process of consecration of a cultural producer.

Art cinema is often institutionalised through networks of film festival and arthouse circuits into a genre defined by its high-art status rather than its formal properties. Despite her lack of a prior background of fame and cinematic styles, Anocha and her films are endorsed as the product of high artistic values which are accumulated and attached to the brands of those distributors. In branding a film's identity, both a cultural producer and an audience play a significant role in offering and acquiring the meaning of a para-text. Through Jonathan Gray's concept of attachment and 'semiotic chains',⁷⁹⁷ the features of high arts quality – the names of the arts-cinema specialised companies, the lists of auteur-directors in their catalogues, their connections with the esteemed national/international powerhouses, and the usage of regular templates in the design of promotional materials – are transferred to Anocha and her works directly. This is possible because

⁷⁹⁷ Gray, pp.27-29.

the meaning of a paratext depends on the audience's memory of its former application through their long memory of the past.⁷⁹⁸

Listed as one of the profile directors in the institution of global art cinema through the design template of her spin-off media – in this case, her film's DVD covers – these paratexts signify the authorial intertextuality between Anocha and world-class auteurs, despite the fact that her film was merely her directorial debut. Although the names of auteurs might be shared in the same way together everywhere in the world, there is also a specific operation of a trans/national encounter in this interrelation between Anocha and her senior directors. In other words, each territory has its own intertextuality between text, institution and authorship that will shape up the meaning of a paratext surrounding Anocha's global recognition. In Poland, the authorial preference is connected to the transnational and trans-medial artist Andrzej Klimowski who designs the film posters. But in a general sense, Anocha's authorship is more connected to Apichatpong. This trans/national encounter surrounding the paratexts signifies the complicated process of reading a text in the contemporary world of art cinema, in which the scope of territories should also be taken into account. As Jonathan Gray puts it, a text not only talks back to and revises other texts, either implicitly or explicitly calling for us to connect their meanings to previous texts, but additionally, we always make sense of texts partly through the frameworks offered by other texts. This is intertextuality – the inescapable links between texts.⁷⁹⁹ It may be argued that the global auteur might have to integrate other key factors such as the trans/international elements in the study of paratextuality surrounding them.

As a result, the interrelation between Anocha and Apichatpong – both in the realms of contexts and paratexts – does not merely account only for the influence of one generation over the younger, both in terms of cinematic languages and mode of production, but also signifies the cultural and social effects on the emerging global generation. To quote Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the global generation 'depends on the global dynamics such as production and markets, media and advertising, migration and tourism,'⁸⁰⁰ and their works are made like 'mosaic pieces that cannot be fitted together to make a unified picture.'⁸⁰¹ Unlike previous generations that have become recognisable through textual references such as the 1970s Social-Critique Cinema or through their directing background like the late 1990s advertising-based New Thai Cinema, Anocha's generation

⁷⁹⁸ Hobbs, p.24.

⁷⁹⁹ Gray, pp.31-31.

⁸⁰⁰ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, pp.25-6.

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.29.

has generally achieved recognition through their modes of filmmaking as the Thai Independents. The growth of a global niche film industry in the last two decades has facilitated the paths for this generation to enter the international film circuit more easily, and more directly propelled them into the directing role compared to their senior fellows. However, compared to the New Thai Cinema generation who have been more associated with professional producers and sales agents in the global film industry, the works of this newer generation have still been restricted within the 'imagined community'⁸⁰² discourses – in this case, the film festival circuits where the size of audiences cannot be measured statistically. They take advantage of what Simon Hobbs addresses as the elements of 'art film paratextuality,' in sustaining its status of high culture, consisting of authorial branding, national branding, critical legitimisation, and the significance of the festival circuit – all of which are also used in the presentation of the spin-offs of Anocha's films.

Bourdieu's power of consecration concept is well justified here in analysing the global rise of this generation which depends on industrial and social context, rather than the construction of their signatures and audiences. In these contexts, all stakeholders – artists, patrons, critics and audience, who are in Bourdieu's words 'the cultural producers' – are involved in the process of production. In the global art cinema culture, this incorporates filmmakers, crew, producers, film festival organisers, distributors, critics and audience, who will compete against each other to take the lead role. I argue that in the case of young filmmakers, their achievements are increasingly governed by agents or institutions in the discourses of global film industry. Together with the contemporary rise of the global generation, the Thai independent generation is more identified with what I define as the institutional or globally generational authorship. In this mode of address, they can be recognised in a short and fast pace by the supports of industrial and social activities, in which their creativity or authorship might be concealed.

However, Bourdieu is reluctant to evoke the concept of space and time as one of the requirements that need to be addressed within the dialogues of the field of cultural production. In regard to the frame of time, the industrial and social differences encountered by the three directors had already caused the imbalance of supportive activities during their filmmaking journeys. Apichatpong seemed to encounter the most difficult path during his initial filmmaking years constructing his own independent art cinema, while Pen-ek had to rely on his advertising fellows and international producers like Barendrecht. Anocha was the most successful grantee to attain all public production support through film festival circuits. Despite several difficulties he encountered, Apichatpong still

⁸⁰² Anderson.

manages to mobilise the power and competition in the field by distributing the funds to several agents and institutions across the world so that he, as the centre of production, can maintain his creative power. This tendency is not fixed but often adapts over time. Pen-ek, for example, has shifted from full freedom and collaboration during the making of his first two works, to the loss of control during the pan-Asian co-productions, and then to the independent state of funding and production in his last two projects. Without the consistent support from international producers and festival-programmers – with the exception of Wouter Barendrecht – Pen-ek has not been fully consecrated by the institutions and agents in the same way as Anocha has. Additionally, he would have had an opportunity to build up his own styles if he did not expect to succeed in a global film industry. Similarly, Anocha's sole creativity might become more recognised if she were to move away from the institutional dependence to the International Film Festival of Rotterdam or Apichatpong's influences. We may see this eventualize in future, as her last two films have started to move onto other festivals such as the Berlin International Film Festival.

Like many of her contemporaries in the post-feminist era, where female rights are often fought for in less directly political ways, Anocha's sense of feminism is strongly engaged with the notion of the absent mother or the woman away from the home. Part of this might relate to the relative social status of women in Southeast Asia. Although working in the film medium used to be considered an expensive undertaking in the region, women who had connections or higher social status could enter the profession. In fact, among the three directors, it is Pen-ek's works in which the female roles are much stronger than the male characters.

The location of discourses where the field of cultural production operates also affects the nature of competition that happens between agents and institutions. European-model co-productions seem not to be well-justified in Asia where the studios are more affordable to invest in for international projects, contrary to Europe where both big and small-scaled companies join the co-productions. Some examples can be seen from the collaboration between Pen-ek's pan-Asian projects and Asian film studios, as well as between Apichatpong and small-scaled European film companies. In Apichatpong's case, despite the global collaboration in his film financing, more of the funds come from European counterparts, while Pen-ek's majority of the funds were taken from studios in Asia, in which East Asian countries were prioritised. But the two regions prefer different kinds of movies and casting. This can be seen in how Asian co-producers in Pen-ek's pan-Asian projects were all involved with such studios as Cathay Films Asia of Singapore – the most developed country in the region – Japan's Pioneer LDC for *Last Life in the Universe*, and Hong Kong's Focus Film and South Korean movie mogul CJ Entertainment for *Invisible Waves*. Even the newly-established Hong Kong

company Applause Pictures also preferred to invest in genre projects during the turn of the century, as seen in Nonzee Nimitbutr's works.

Taking Anocha's case as an example, the geopolitics in Asia affect the operation in the field of cultural production and consumption. Trying to reach all kinds of film festivals in Asia and Europe during her formative years, from leading to medium-ranged events, Anocha's works are more appreciated in Europe where the agents or institutions have long produced 'the universe of belief' in the art for art's sake.⁸⁰³ In this case, the producers of the work and the producers of the meaning and value of the work are significant. At the same time, Asian favouritism or partial patronage hinders the director and her works, preventing them from being prioritised as a top representative of Thailand. Top Asian film festivals like Busan and Hong Kong also give equal opportunities to popular genre film directors and studios. We also cannot forget that when talking about Asian cinema, there is still a geopolitical imbalance between the regions. In general, East Asian cinema – like Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – is more exportable while Southeast Asia is considered more of a niche market. As a result, it is unsurprising that Anocha chose to go to Europe for her production plans. To develop more collaboration in the region in the future, certain approaches from several Asian scholars might be useful here. As I mention in this thesis, cultural collaboration in Asia is more fruitful in the popular film circle, especially in East Asia. A regional cultural market has emerged in the Asian region due to the collaboration of businessmen in forming 'alliances to facilitate transnational bypasses to connect individuals and communities, and provide cultural content'⁸⁰⁴ to the region. Although some attempts have been made in Southeast Asian countries, most of the activities are limited only to the same certain groups instead of expanding across audiences. SEAFIC (Southeast Asia Fiction Film Lab), an intensive script and development lab for Southeast Asian filmmakers, ran only a few years before its closure. Bangkok ASEAN film festival, supported by Thailand's Ministry of Culture, was attended by a select few groups of people, rather than general audiences.

Koichi Iwabuchi's notion of 'inter-Asian referencing'⁸⁰⁵ is useful here. Asian people should learn and relate each other in the dialogues of Asian cinema, not only in the academic circle but also in everyday lives. Prasenjit Duara calls this tendency in the name of 'inter-dependence', as he puts it:

⁸⁰³ Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.229.

⁸⁰⁴ Otmazgin, p.500.

⁸⁰⁵ Iwabuchi, *De-westernisation*, p.44.

we need to recognise our interdependence and foster transnational consciousness in our education and cultural institutions, not at the cost of but for the cost of our national attachments.’⁸⁰⁶

My study on the rise of Thai art cinema has illustrated that the concept of authorship has never waned from debates on global art cinema. Through the developments in social and industrial contexts in the last two decades, it is easier for a young filmmaker to enter the circuit faster. Despite many contextual supports, authorial exposure is still necessary in the dialogues of transnational cinema. In fact, to be one of the top global authors, one should maintain this authorial supremacy. Even Pen-ek and Anocha also show glimpses of individual craftsmanship in their cinematic works, despite contextual and industrial influences over their works. Pen-ek’s works usually play with the identity crisis of lead protagonists in crime and violence; Anocha’s political consciousness and her particular portrayal of women’s roles can be seen in her vibrant representations of Thailand’s history and its struggle with democracy. But thematic analysis is one of the elements that are hardly emphasised in the study of authorship, with the exception of Barrett Hodsdon⁸⁰⁷ who introduces the concept of ‘auteur markership’ to bridge the gap between the old *mise-en-scene* criticism and the presentation of ‘specifics of an authorial vantage point.’ The term refers to a formal way of looking at, bracketing, and marking the depiction of a fictive world to arrive at a quasi-aesthetic-philosophical regard on the passage of life. To some extent, some cinematic authorship is also created by these directors in order to present their messages, only it has not been developed with consistency or cinematic challenge. There is a possibility that a contemporary global author can build up signs of personal signatures in their works, especially through the placement of himself in the intermediary role of control. In the same way that his cinematic practice’s ‘purity has no less been supplemented by than benefited from other arts,’⁸⁰⁸ Apichatpong’s producing entity has also benefited from added value by crossing over to incorporate multiple media disciplines and global territories – perhaps this might be one of the ways that a global author should do.

This thesis also highlights the industrial and social changes in the last two decades that illustrate how an unknown film culture can become recognised at the global level. Arguably, it may be related to the growth of film-educated newcomers around the world in the last few decades – through the arrival of digitalization, in the same manner as the rise of New Hollywood during the 1970s. With the support of several film festivals, newly graduated filmmakers can enter the cinema circle easier.

⁸⁰⁶ Duara, p.983.

⁸⁰⁷ Hodsdon, p.9.

⁸⁰⁸ Kim Jihoon, pp.125-141.

Like the New Hollywood during the 1970s, it is now 'new wave', 'new cinema' moving from one country to another, as we have seen in several major film festivals during the last decades. Consequentially, I argue that new approaches and theories might emerge if the same model of study is applied other film industries and territories: for example, other regions of Southeast Asian cinema like the Philippines, or East Asian Cinema where different industrial contexts are offered. In terms of the development of one single director, we should also observe his future changes when he has to depend less on the film festival resources due to the arrival of newcomers, as exemplified in the case of Anocha. Most importantly, in the studying of contexts that will influence one director's authorship, one should look beyond a single limited discourse. Putting a director as the centre of study – in my term 'director as method' - will reduce his institutional dependence, as often proposed by the poststructuralists. By limiting the study of the interrelation between an author and one particular institution, there is the potential that he will emerge only as an institutional product. His negotiating ability with external bodies will be reduced. In the case of Apichatpong for example, he would be seen only as a Cannes International Film Festival mentee if his negotiations with other global financiers were omitted from the study. Without putting him at the centre of the research, his mobility and management power will be overlooked, especially considering that he has also produced movies on his own. In other words, Cannes International Film Festival is only one of the contributors to Apichatpong's filmmaking travelogue, among many other stakeholders. The difference is only that this stakeholder is more powerful than many others because the festival gives him the symbolic capital that he can use to his benefit in funding requests, distribution and exhibition. But in some situations, such as in the case of Anocha, we can see that she cannot avoid the influences from both institutions – such as the International Film Festival of Rotterdam or the distributors – and Apichatpong, which results in her work developing more in the line of institutional authorship.

Another point that should be further studied includes the interrelation between the directors and their American connection, which I think should be focused on textual analysis. Apichatpong clearly clarifies the importance of the Art Institute of Chicago. "I owe everything to Art Institute, especially the experimental films. And the spirit there. For us, [we learn that] 'anything is possible for all other films. Everything echoes this life and transfer into film.'"⁸⁰⁹ In fact, it is commonly known that Apichatpong loves the works of the late American experimental filmmaker Bruce Baillie and often

⁸⁰⁹ Cannes International Film Festival, 'Meet the Team from the Film Memoria by Apichatpong', *Cannes International Film Festival*, 16 July 2021 <<https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/74-editions/retrospective/2021/actualites/audios/meet-the-team-from-the-film-memoria-by-apichatpong-weerasethakul>> [accessed 6 July 2022].

paid tribute to him.⁸¹⁰ He also has connected with several visual arts museum in the US, from New Museum and Guggenheim Museum. For Anocha, her connection with Columbia University gave her a chance to work with Ming-Kai Leung, who was her classmate at the same film school. Anocha connected with the US again later when she received a visiting lectureship at Harvard University, which supported the making of her third and fourth features, *Krabi, 2562* and *Come Here*, and currently an assistant professor at Columbia. In the case of Pen-ek, no continual relation exists between his school and filmmaking career except that New York was the first place that gave him a chance to appreciate art films. Also the works of American independents have a lot of influences on Pen-ek's earlier works as he accepted that he has learnt filmmaking by practices.

Last but not least is the expansion of authorial study in the works of some generic directors, especially those in Asia. Although the works of these directors might travel less to the US, my experience as a Thai consultant with the genre-oriented Far East Film Festival in Italy, has always signified some of this connection either in the selections of general programmes and retrospectives. Many films have been selected from the ground of directors' names, though they are the works by studios. Perhaps the changing values of one transnational cinema – except the Hollywood works - is often regarded as 'art or world cinema' when it is shown in other borders.

If these findings can be presented to the policy-planners in Asia, especially in the Southeast Asian countries, this research might be more useful for them to designate the strategies in supporting arthouse cinema-making. So far, most governments still follow the directions that have been used in film festival circuits, which sometimes are not appropriate to be applied in this region. For example, a small number of funds are distributed to several filmmakers who at the end cannot find other financial sources and then their projects have not been completed. I argue, there should be some intermediate strategies that should be more effective – the strategies that combine both east and west circumstances to be considered and then to be fulfilled.

This research should also be useful to academic scholars, as it has introduced a number of theories into Asian and global contexts. Several theories have been considered and rethought before being revised or refined to produce new conceptualizations, such as the theories of the production of Asian global art cinema, the role of producers in making global art cinema, the regional hierarchies that affect the development of global art cinema productions (not only Asian popular cinema), the

⁸¹⁰ 'Bruce Baillie', *Sabzian*, 10 April 2020 <<https://www.sabzian.be/note/bruce-baillie-1931-2020>>[accessed 6 July 2022].

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changing paradigm of interstitial cinema, the hybridity of filmmaking culture, and the new approach to contemporary post-feminism. These discussions should suggest ways to further develop debates on Asian cinema and its global exposure in the long run.

APPENDIX: Financial Supporters in Each Project

Table 1: Pen-ek Ratanaruang's Films

<p><i>Fun Bar Karaoke, 1997</i></p> <p>Executive Producer: Five Star Production (Thailand)</p> <p>Producer: The Film Factory (Thailand)</p> <p>Source: English press kit provided by The Film Factory</p>
<p><i>Sixty-nine, 1999</i></p> <p>Executive Producer: Five Star Production (Thailand)</p> <p>Producer: The Film Factory (Thailand)</p> <p>Source: Fortissimo Film Sales Brochure.</p>
<p><i>Monrak Transistor, 2001</i></p> <p>Executive Producer: Five Star Production (Thailand)</p> <p>Producer: Cinemasia Production (Thailand)</p> <p>Source: Fortissimo Film Sales English press kit released in Cannes International Film Festival 2002</p>
<p><i>Last Life in the Universe, 2003</i></p> <p>Executive Producers: Five Star Production (Thailand); Pioneer LDC (Japan); Fortissimo Film Sales (Netherlands); Cathay Films Asia, PTA (Singapore); and Paradis Films (France).*</p> <p>Production Companies: Cinemasia (Thailand), and Bohemian Films (USA)</p> <p>Source: Five Star Production Thai press kit.</p> <p>*This company is only mentioned in the Thai press kit, but not in the movie's credit lines.</p>
<p><i>Ploy, 2007</i></p> <p>Executive Producer: Five Star Production</p> <p>Producer: The Film Factory (Thailand)</p> <p>Co-producer: Fortissimo Film Sales and Five Star Production</p> <p>Source: English press kit in Cannes International Film Festival</p>
<p><i>Nymph, 2009</i></p> <p>Executive Producer: Five Star Production</p> <p>Producer: Fortissimo Film Sales, Saksiri Chantarangsri</p> <p>Production Company: Five Star Production</p> <p>Source: Fortissimo Film Sales English press kit released in Cannes International Film Festival</p>

Headshot, 2011

Funding: Office of Contemporary Art and Culture Thailand

Co-production: Memento Films International (France)

Association: Wild Side Films (France)

With the support of the Göteborg International Film Festival Fund (Sweden)

In co-operation with Tokyo Project Gathering (Tokyo International Film Festival)

Source: Local Colour Film's English press kit

Samui Song, 2017

In association with: Cinema22 (Thailand)

With the support of Ministry of Culture (Thailand)

Supported by World Cinema Fund; SØRFOND (Norway)

Production Company: Bluering Company (Thailand)

Co-production companies: augenschein Filmproduktion (Germany); Tenk.tv (Norway)

Source: Bluering's English English press kit.

Table 2: Apichatpong Weerasethakul Films

<p><i>Mysterious Object at Noon, 2000</i></p> <p>Hubert Balls Fund in association with 9/6 Cinema Factory and Firecracker Film</p> <p>Support from Toshiba and Fuji Photo Film (Thailand), Chateau Post (Thailand), The James Nelson Award (USA)</p> <p>Tele-cine at the Fame Post-Production Co Lit, with support from Ms. Pornanong Mujalin, Sumet Amornworapon, William Watts</p> <p>Edited at Chateau Post Bangkok with support from Tony Morias, Peter Jones, Book, Beum, Oi, Pluffy Omo</p> <p>Post production laboratory: Siam Film Development. With support from Sa-nga Janjarasskul; Sound mixed by Karun Peaukjaipeaw</p> <p>Producer: Gridthiya Gaweewong (Project 304), Mingmongkol Sonakul (Firecracker Film)</p> <p>Source: The company's press material and the movie's credit lines.</p>
<p><i>Blissfully Yours, 2002</i></p> <p>Production Company: La-Ong Dao / Kick the Machine</p> <p>In association with: Anna Sanders Films</p> <p>Produced by Eric Chan and Charles de Meaux</p> <p>Source: Kick the Machines' English press material</p>
<p><i>Iron Pussy, 2003</i></p> <p>Production Companies: Kick the Machine & G Gate Production</p> <p>Produced by Piyanan Chanklom G-Gate Production for GMM Pictures & Ray Pictures Peeraya Prommachat Kick the Machine</p> <p>Source: GMM Pictures' brochure</p>
<p><i>Tropical Malady, 2004</i></p> <p>With the support of Fonds Sud Cinema France, Fondazione MonteCinemaVerita Switzerland, Hessen Invest Film, with the participation of Backup Films</p> <p>Anna Sanders Films & TIFA, Downtown Pictures and Thoke + Moebius Film</p> <p>In association with Rai Cinema, Fabrica Cinema</p> <p>Co-production TIFA, Downtown Pictures, Thoke Moebius Film</p> <p>Source: From the movie's credit lines.</p>

Syndrome and Century, 2006

New Crowned Hope Festival Vienna 2006 (present)

In association with Fortissimo Films and Backup Films

In co-production with ANNA SANDERS FILMS and TIFA

With the participation of Fonds Sud Cinema

Source: From the company's credit line.

Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives, 2010

Illuminations Films present A Kick the Machine Films (Thailand) and Illuminations Films Past Lives (UK) Production

In co-production with Anna Sanders Films (France); The Match Factory (Germany); GFF Geissendoerfer Film-und Fernsehproduktion KG (Germany); Eddie Saeta, S.A. (Spain)

With the participation of Fonds Sud Cinema (France); Ministère de la culture et de la communication CNC (France); Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes (France)

With the Support of World Cinema Fund (Germany) ; The Hubert Bals Fund, International Film Festival of Rotterdam (Netherlands) ; Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture (Thailand)

In association with ZDF/Arte (Germany); Louverture Films (USA)

And with Haus der Kunst, Munich (Germany); FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Liverpool (UK); Animate Projects, London (UK)

Source: The Match Factory's press kit

Mekong Hotel, 2012

Illuminations Films (UK) and Kick the Machine Films (Thailand) present

In association with ARTE France – La Lucarne

With the participation of The Match Factory (Germany)

Post production supported by Jacob Burns Film Centre

With additional support from Fuori Orario (Rai Tre)

Source: The Match Factory's press kit

Cemetery of Splendour, 2015

A Kick the Machine Films (Thailand) and Illuminations Films (Past Lives) Production (UK)

In co-production with Anna Sanders Films (France); Geißendörfer Film- und Fernsehproduktion KG (Germany); Match Factory Productions (Germany); ZDF/arte (Germany), and Astro Shaw (Malaysia); Asia Culture Centre-Asian Arts Theatre (South Korea); Detalle Films (Mexico); Louverture Films (USA); Tordenfilm (Norway)

With the participation of Aide aux cinémas du monde; Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée; and Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères; Institut Français (France)

With the support of Sjørfond (Norway), World Cinema Fund (Germany), Hubert Bals Fund (Netherlands), Hong Kong – Asia Film Financing Forum

Source: The Match Factory's press kit

Memoria, 2021

Production Companies: Burning S.A.S (Columbia); Kick The Machine (Thailand), Illuminations Films (Past Lives) (UK)

Co-production Companies: Anna Sanders Films (France), Match Factory Productions (Germany); Piano (Mexico); X stream Pictures (China); IQiYi Pictures (China), Titan Creative Entertainment (China); Rediance (China), ZDF/arte (Germany), Louverture Films (USA), Doha Film Institute (Qatar), Beijing Contemporary Art Foundation (China), Bord Cadre films (Switzerland), Sovereign Films (UK), Field of Vision (USA), 185 Films (Thailand)

With the support of: Fondo Fílmico Colombia, EFICINE 189 (Mexico), Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg (Germany), Edouard Malingue Gallery (Hong Kong), SCAI The Bathhouse (Japan), Universidad Nacional de Colombia (Colombia), Hubert Bals Fund (Netherlands), Purin Pictures (Thailand), 100 Tonson Foundation (Thailand), Estudios Churubusco Azteca (Mexico)

With the Participation of: L'Aide aux Cinémas du Monde Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée – Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international – Institut Français (France)

Source: The Match Factory's press kit

Table 3: Anocha Suwichakornpong's Films

<p><i>Mundane History, 2009</i></p> <p>Office of Contemporary Art and Culture (OCAC), Ministry of Culture Hubert Bals Fund (Script and Development Fund, and post-production grant) Post-production support from Asian Cinema Fund from Busan International Film Festival Source: Electric Eel Films' English and Thai press kits.</p>
<p><i>By the Time It Gets Dark, 2016</i></p> <p>Hubert Bals Fund (Script and Development Fund, HBF+Europe Minority Co-production Support scheme and the CineMart's Prince Claus Fund) Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, Ministry of Culture, Thailand Doha Film Institute Grants, Qatar V.S. service Thailand Prince Claus Film Fund Award, The Netherlands Source: Electric Eel Films' English press kit.</p>
<p><i>Krabi, 2562, 2020</i></p> <p>Production Companies: Electric Eel Films; and Urth Films Supported by indiegogo crowdfunding with 122 contributors In co-production with Anti-Worlds In Association with V.S. Service; 4A4 Productions; The Film Study Center Harvard University; LEF Moving Image Fund; and Association with the Centre for Independent Documentary Source: From the movie's credit line.</p>
<p><i>Come Here, 2021</i></p> <p>Hubert Bals Fund (Script and Development Fund) Next Masters Support Program, Talents Tokyo The Film Study Centre at Harvard University Visions Sud Est Source: From the website https://diversion-th.com/comehere/</p>

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