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Introduction:
Remaking Chinese Cinemas, Hollywood Style

When Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000) leapt onto global screens, many saw it as a cinematic event that heralded the unprecedented arrival of Chinese cinemas in Hollywood. As part of the recent "Asian invasion"[1] of the American multiplex, where mainstream audiences are now eagerly taking to the various Asian cinemas, this Chinese cultural presence dominated the invasion, thanks in part to the migration of numerous stars, directors, and various players from Hong Kong's film industry: a professional diaspora spurred by the 1997 British handover of Hong Kong to mainland China. Since I began my research in 2000 on this then-emerging cinematic phenomenon, a recurring commentary I encounter is that this trend, like all Hollywood trends, is a transient one: the Chinese are only Tinseltown's current cultural flavor of the month, soon to be replaced by the next big thing capable of revitalizing Hollywood (as Chinese cinemas are believed to be currently doing), thus rejuvenating and sustaining the studios' capitalist productivity and hegemony. In engaging this prediction of the waning interest in Chinese kung fu flicks, sword-fighting spectacles, historical epics, supernatural thrillers, romance/family melodramas, and Chinatown crime stories, one cannot help but wonder how long Chinese cinemas can maintain their current pride of place in Hollywood's multiculturalist approach to cultural appropriation and syncretism? What strategies can these cinemas resort to in order to achieve longevity in the business, and at what cost?

I open with this notion of pop cultural "transience" in my study of the Chinese in Hollywood because it provokes a rather visceral response in me, as both a cultural and film critic; a response that I can only describe, with a deep sense of ambivalence and an eagerness to disavow, as "cultural nationalism." Being an ethnic Chinese from Singapore, I find myself reluctantly cheering on the success of Chinese cinemas in Hollywood in a

culturally conflicted fashion: mainly because I bemoan, as a student of film, the often cringe-worthy aesthetic shortcomings of these movies, while questioning, as an anti-Orientalist and anti-essentialist cultural critic, the social, political, and cultural implications of these filmic texts. My painting this personal image of critical and cultural ambivalence and anxiety initiates a theoretical mapping of the kind of cultural politics surrounding this cinematic phenomenon. To bring into further relief the emergent critical questions that color this picture, I now rehearse three very recent moments of globalized Hollywood spectacle where cultural anxieties and contradictions intermingle with the celluloid magic and sparkle that the Chinese in Hollywood have engendered so far.

Hollywood Spectacle One: The much anticipated kung fu fantasy match up between Jackie Chan and Jet Li occurs not in a local Hong Kong production, as fans thought it would.[2] Instead, this über-duel takes place in the number one US box-office hit *The Forbidden Kingdom* (2008), a movie helmed by *The Lion King* director Rob Minkoff and distributed by Lionsgate and the Weinstein Company. This faceoff between Jackie Chan and Jet Li is of such epic proportions from a kung fu cinema standpoint that even the stars themselves decided to downplay audience expectations of the touted fight scene.[3] While he publicly dismissed the script as "nonsense," Jackie Chan chose to sign on to the project because "they told . . . [him] Jet [Li] was doing it." He described his fight scene with Li as one that was "so natural" that they shot the scene only after one rehearsal. In fact, they worked so well together that the director had to ask them to slow down the pacing of the fight sequence.[4] In the eyes of their fans, this representation of their collaboration is indeed worthy of a clash of two kung fu titans.[5] Whether or not this media narrative was part of a marketing ploy, the strategy clearly worked: the film raked in an impressive US$20.9 million during its opening weekend in American cinemas;[6] and an equally stunning US$21.4 million in China, despite Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post*'s criticism that the film "hardly offers a progressive understanding of the multifarious aspects of Chinese culture as it rehashes the themes of kung fu classics" and a Hong Kong magazine characterizing its plot as "unbelievably weird."[7]

The culturally incongruous and "weird" plot, of course, did not go unnoticed by the stars. Chan anxiously reminded viewers that the film was "made for Americans. Chinese viewers may not like it"; while Li concurred by noting how "this is an American production, created by an American screenwriter, about an American child's dream of the Journey To the West story. It would be more interesting to approach this film from a different angle."[8] While its narrative relies on the story of the Monkey King in *Journey*

to the West (*Xiyou ji*), a Ming dynasty classic believed to have been written by Wu Chengen, *The Forbidden Kingdom* updates it for American audiences by retelling it from the perspective of American kung fu-crazed teenager Jason Tripitikas (Michael Angarano), who is magically transported to the world of ancient China to free the immobilized Monkey King (Jet Li), with the help of drunken master Lu Yan (Jackie Chan), from the magical spell of the evil Jade Warlord. This narrative premise basically retells *The Wizard of Oz* story, with Jason taking on the Dorothy role in his search for a way home. His encounters with the denizens of a fantastical ancient China — like the culturally colorful but alien characters of the Land of Oz — provide the psychic means for Jason to attain a new sense of heroic confidence (and a requisite set of martial arts skills) to confront the bullies and thugs of his urban American reality. Mainstream American audiences' familiarity with the reformulated Oz tale served to cement *The Forbidden Kingdom*'s successful appeal; while the Monkey King mythology, together with Chan and Li's superstardom, brought Chinese audiences to theaters internationally.

The combination of Hollywood's remaking of the *Journey to the West*, the much-awaited Chan-Li matchup, and the film's impressive global box office success marks for me a spectacular confluence of the critical and cultural issues that this book seeks to investigate. Like many of the films I look at in the chapters that follow, *The Forbidden Kingdom* is an excellent example of a transnational cinematic production, with American company Casey Silver Productions and China's Huayi Brothers and the China Film Co-Production Corporation joining forces in this instance. (Huayi is a rising media group based in China known for co-producing *Kung Fu Hustle* with Sony/Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia[9]; and China Film Co-Production Corporation is credited for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.) With these transnational and multinational collaborative production efforts becoming the norm, what cultural, political, and aesthetic effects will one witness in movies involving the Chinese in Hollywood? What forms of cultural hybridity and filmic synergies will such (un)equal partnerships create? While being thoroughly entertained by the film, I found myself most critically intrigued instead by *The Forbidden Kingdom*'s extra-diegetic elements, particularly the opening credit sequence — Jason's movie poster collection of films like *Monkey Goes West* (1966), *One-Armed Swordsman* (1967), *The 36th Chamber of Shaolin* (1978), *Drunken Master* (1978), and *The Bride with White Hair* (1993)[10] come to vivid life. Using an ingenious animated pastiche of classic, painted poster imagery, the film visualizes symbolically the concepts of cultural appropriation, reconfiguration, and synthesis, which constitute the mechanics of remaking Chinese cinemas in Hollywood.

Hollywood Spectacle Two: The scene opens with our intrepid heroine in a drab sampan-woman disguise creeping into an Oriental pirates' den in order to meet its evil lord. Upon being discovered, she and her companions are dragged into a dark lair fit for the nefarious Fu Manchu. On the platform stands a tall bald figure imposingly decked out in apparently Qing dynasty robes,[11] looking battle-worn but regal. He slowly turns around and deliberately pauses for the classic profile shot. Suddenly, audiences encounter the familiar mien of Hong Kong superstar Chow Yun-fat cosmetically remade into the salt-encrusted pirate captain Sao Feng. With thick bushy eyebrows framing his blood-shot eyes, a sparse but long beard reminiscent of *Flash Gordon*'s Ming the Merciless, a menacing knife scar cutting diagonally across his forehead and face, and frighteningly long, sharp fingernails painted black, Sao Feng smiles sinisterly as he masterfully proclaims in Hong Kong-accented English, "Welcome to Singapore!"

Chow Yun-fat remade into pirate captain Sao Feng

This now familiar episode is the opening sequence in the final installment of Disney's summer blockbuster trilogy *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007). As a seafaring adventure where the protagonist, Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp), crisscrosses the globe to encounter an array of culturally exotic characters, the film, as a Hollywood blockbuster with indubitable global box office potential, similarly travels well by means of its multicultural representation, giving the film the correctness of a glossy Benetton ad. Representing "Asia" in its multicultural lineup is the epitome of Hong Kong masculine cool, Chow Yun-fat, who has been expertly made up to look like an evil Chinese pirate, hiding out in Singapore and lusting after Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightley). Chow's role of Orientalist stereotype might be small — his character Sao Feng dies midway through the movie after his attempt to sexually assault Elizabeth — but his presence in this film is nonetheless

significant in the context of his career in Hollywood: Chow has indeed arrived in America. His joining a requisite star-studded cast of a blockbuster epic also signals the significant place the Chinese now occupy in Hollywood and American cinema.

But what exactly is the nature of this interest in the Chinese? What motivates it? What sorts of cinematic images and representations does it foster? What precedence in American film history feeds it? In other words, what forms of American cultural politics does this interest turn on and engage? The singular instance of Chow Yun-fat's exoticized appearance in *At World's End* also throws up difficult questions of the cultural cost to attain mainstream Hollywood success: what kinds of roles do ethnic Chinese stars and actors have to play to gain this success? How does the Chinese Hollywood presence affect Chinese cinemas globally? What effect does this presence have on Asian American cinema, considering its independent and alternative cinematic history? Does this presence reinforce Orientalist imagery to pander to American audience expectations of the racist depictions of the Chinese that have emerged out of classic Hollywood? Or are there possibilities of subversive resistance and cultural critique even within a transnational capitalist industry that privileges box office earnings over cultural and political concerns?

The advertising machinery of Buena Vista International kicked into high gear before the film's opening here in Singapore. Ubiquitous posters and huge wall panels dotted the island nation with the tagline "Welcome to Singapore!" turning Sao Feng's proclamation into a tourism-board style marketing strategy. Made up of 70% ethnic-Chinese, Singapore audiences not only love their Chinese-language movies, they absolutely adore Chow Yun-fat and his Singaporean wife Jasmine. This is a textbook case of the power of Hollywood's global appeal accomplished through the specific nodes of cultural localism — in this case, Chineseness and Chinese-language cinemas — within the transnational systems of cinematic production, distribution, and consumption. This global/local nexus that characterizes the contemporary Chinese presence in Hollywood constitutes one of the focal points of critical analysis in this book.

Hollywood Spectacle Three: Flushed with success from *Chicago*'s triumph at the 75th Academy Awards, Rob Marshall goes on to bring Arthur Golden's novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* gloriously to life on the big screen in 2005, a movie destined to be a hysterical camp classic in the likes of, dare I say, *All about Eve* (1950) and *Mommie Dearest* (1981). For who can resist the fabulous gay-iconic performance of Gong Li as Hatsumomo, especially as she threatens Zhang Ziyi's Sayuri with "I shall destroy you!" uttered with the dramatic flourish of a drag-queen?

But clearly not everyone was laughing at the absurdly contradictory image of Chinese actresses playing geishas speaking perfect English. Though being touted by *Time* magazine's Richard Corliss as "Hollywood's Asian Romance,"[12] audiences in Japan and China did not buy into this claim. Having three Chinese stars play the main roles, when high-profile Hollywood acting jobs for Japanese are hard to come by, did not go down well with Japanese viewers,[13] despite the ironic fact that these geisha characters reinforce the Madame Butterfly myth and "the image of sweet, gentle Japanese child-women" as evident in Sayuri.[14] Equally, if not more inflamed, were mainland Chinese audiences. Many denounced the political insensitivity of having Chinese actresses in these geisha roles that are set during the time of World War Two, considering Japan's historic rape of Nanjing in 1937–38 and, more recently, Prime Minister Koizumi's controversial visits to the Yasukuni war shrines in Tokyo.[15] China's State Administration of Radio, Film and Television eventually banned the film.[16]

Of course, mainland China's censorship and outright banning of Hollywood films that inappropriately or negatively depict Chinese culture and politics have a long history. For instance, films such as *Shanghai Express* (1932) and *Limehouse Blues* (1934), both featuring the sensual Anna May Wong playing up the Dragon Lady stereotype, incurred the displeasure of Chinese censors way back in the 1930s.[17] What intrigues me here in the case of *Memoirs of a Geisha* is the way nationalism came roaring back with a vengeance over a Hollywood film, despite the fact that China seeks to insert itself into the network of transnational capital. The central question to ask is: under what cultural political circumstances will Hollywood's deployment of global/local cultural strategies work for their film productions involving Chineseness. For a film that boasts a *trans*national appeal through its pan-Asian casting, the irony is that this multinational casting is the source of discontent. It is also crucial to analyze the motivational factors that spur this kind of cultural nationalist response from the Chinese government and Chinese audiences both in the mainland and across the diaspora. This instance of global Hollywood gone wrong exposes precisely the complex and conflicted cultural and political discourses that mire the tense national-transnational interface, especially as one watches Chinese cinemas enter Hollywood and its network, and as Hollywood remakes, reinvents, and reconfigures Chineseness into its own likeness or the likeness of its perceived Other.

Critical Perimeters: East Asia, Hollywood, the World

Beginning with the premise that post-1997 Hollywood saw a new, resurgent interest in the Chinese presence in its cinema, this book focuses its attention on a number of aspects of this phenomenon. One of its primary concerns is the proliferation of Hollywood and Hollywood-inflected films featuring ethnic Chinese stars like Jet Li, Michelle Yeoh, Gong Li, Chow Yun-fat, and Jackie Chan, in works directed by the likes of John Woo, Wayne Wang, Wong Kar-wai, and Zhang Yimou. This ethnic Chinese presence is clearly not "new" in the sense that it does not form a full cultural/national body of film separate from the commercial and art-house cinemas of mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Instead, the long histories and traditions of these national cinemas, together with Chinese-American film, contribute to, overlap with, and provide the contexts for this new Chinese presence. Though this presence is clearly derivative, the various streams of Chinese cinematic histories, traditions, and practices conjoin to produce a nascent film aesthetic and sensibility that offer Chineseness as a commodity for Hollywood's transnational system of cinematic production and consumption. This complex system of interconnections and relationships compels me to address the issue not only from the standpoint of Hollywood films, but also to consider the effects this phenomenon has on films coming out of Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, and Chinese America. In any case, in an age of multinational and transnational co-productions and co-financing (as demonstrated by earlier references to Huayi Brothers and the China Film Co-Production Corporation in my discussion of *The Forbidden Kingdom*), it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish these cinemas in strictly national terms. Thus, my analyses would even include films made in and released in theaters in Asia but with the potential to enter the US market, either through limited engagements or DVD sales. In taking on this broader range of cinematic works to transcribe critically the Chinese presence in Hollywood, I am registering the globalizing effects of Hollywood's hegemony. I am also particularly interested in how these Chinese cinemas ride the wave of Hollywood appeal, which is part of its contemporary transnationalization. Like most books of this nature, *Remade in Hollywood* has no ambition, nor the ability, to be comprehensive in its coverage of the various cinemas and its individual films. Instead, it is governed by my own mapping of the topical problematic, through the tracing of the significant and predominant themes, ideas, trends, questions, and concerns.

The temporal framework I have chosen for the book is not arbitrary, but is politically pegged to the July 1997 handover of Hong Kong by the British government to the People's Republic of China. Since the 1984 signing of the

Sino-British Joint Declaration, the territory and its people were plagued by anxieties of what a return to mainland Chinese rule might portend. This anxiety was exacerbated by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, which accelerated the mass exodus of the rich and the mobile to the western countries that welcomed them. The new home for Hong Kong film industry players seemed naturally to be Hollywood, attracting Hong Kong stars, directors, and industry players who were in high demand to make the transition.[18] Such capital-induced diasporas, of course, are complex ones in that their trajectories are never unidirectional, but are bidirectional and even multidirectional in their fluid negotiations of the trans-Pacific capitalist networks that help define the Pacific Rim as a "space of cultural production."[19] Major players like John Woo, Jackie Chan, Chow Yun-fat, Michelle Yeoh, and Jet Li display "flexible citizenship" and are "astronauts"[20] who shuttle between Hollywood, Hong Kong, and wherever film production and promotion take them. The impact of this migration to Hollywood was multifold: film cultures of Hollywood, Asian American cinema, and Chinese cinemas were, in varied ways and to varying degrees, transformed. The rising popularity of the Hong Kong newcomers among American audiences also bode well for those Mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, and Asian American players who aimed for Hollywood success, leading many to ride the Chinese/Asian wave of American cinematic fascination.

The Politics of Cinematic Citationality and Transculturation

As the earlier anecdotal examples of monkey kings, pirates, and geishas serve to demonstrate, this book's examination of the Chinese in Hollywood relies on the theoretical nuances of the cinematic remake. My interest lies less in a concern for the remake in its traditional form as a material filmic practice, but more in its critical efficacy as a trope for cultural reinvention, reconfiguration, and rewriting. This theoretical spinning-off from its narrower definitional confines helps one rethink the Chinese-Hollywood connection and its discursive problematic.

Everyone is familiar with the Hollywood remake as a filmic form of secondariness: one removed from its "original" text, but exploited for its box office potential. Yet the remake is much more complex and multifarious in its variations and permutations, in that one could remake a film in many ways and for different purposes. An older film can be updated to accommodate contemporary trends, values, and politics,[21] such as *The Stepford Wives* (1975

and 2004). A film is remade to impress different audience demographics, like Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995). Some remakes are faithful frame-by-frame retakes as in Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998), while others spoof or mimic the original like in the *Austin Powers* series and *The Tuxedo* (2002) starring Jackie Chan. The kind of remakes that are of special interest here are, of course, the "cross-cultural"[22] ones, considering how the commercially successful Scorsese remake of Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's *Infernal Affairs* (2002) into *The Departed* (2006) has now spawned fresh Hollywood interest in also remaking the Jackie Chan-produced *Enter the Phoenix* (2004).[23]

Remaking as a filmic form aside, its structure and character further bespeak of the very nature of cinema itself. In order to make this point, I now turn to Derrida and his theory of the mark of communication. In his essay "Signature Event Context," Jacques Derrida disrupts the purity of the sign by examining its iterability and citationality:

> This is the possibility on which I wish to insist: the possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication; as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its "original" meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic and nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called "normal" functioning. What would a mark be that one could not cite? And whose origin could not be lost on the way?[24]

In *re*citing Derrida's theory, David Wills constructs the same argument for "the cinematic mark" in what he terms as "cinematic citationality":

> What is being commonly and communally referred to here as the remake, the possibility that exists for a film to be repeated in a different form, should rather be read as the necessary structure of iterability that exists for and within every film . . . The slightest mark is being remarked or remade even as it is being uttered or written, to the extent that it cannot make itself as full presence, as intact and coherent entity. It constitutes itself as reconstitutable, at least it must do so in order to function, that is to say, in order to make sense.[25]

In other words, cinema is a medium of unending citations, quotations, allusions, appropriations, adaptations, remaking, reinventions, rewriting, representations, and hybridizations. Built into the visual and auditory technologies of cinema is this demand for citationality. The power of Derrida's theory and Wills' redeployment of it lies in its deconstruction of essentialist notions of cultural ownership and originality, thus rupturing the boundaries between national cinemas. This is not to say that national cinemas do not exist or that the ideological insistence on those boundaries (real or imaginary) does not have material consequences.

Wills' argument has deep implications for the way we think of transnational Chinese cinemas, of which the Chinese presence in Hollywood is now an integral part. What happens when cinematic citationality leaps cross-culturally, which it must if we are to believe Sheldon Lu's argument that Chinese cinema, in all of its history, is transnational in nature on account that Chinese film is "deeply embedded in the economics of transnational capital"[26]? Patricia Aufderheide offers a telling example of the unpredictable and spiraling way cross-cultural cinematic citationality functions. In her discussion of Sammo Hung's *Eastern Condors* (1987), Aufderheide considers how the film "replays the characters, themes, and plot of" a number of Hollywood war movies.[27] But what is most interesting to me is that at the end of the essay, she gestures to the future where "Hong Kong cinema, itself a pastiche product, may now become the inspiration for tomorrow's Hollywood hits,"[28] an ironic turn that is being realized today. Here we see the possibility of Hong Kong cinema citing Hollywood citing Hong Kong cinema, and this is only taking into account a single linear causal thread (that has turned somewhat circular). This irony of cinematic narcissism was not lost on John Woo who similarly observed "that Hollywood began to imitate Hong Kong movies in the late 1980s and 1990s because Hong Kong films (to a certain degree) are imitations of Hollywood films, so Hollywood is imitating Hollywood,"[29] a process that David Bordwell calls "the Hongkongification of American cinema."[30] This mode of citation is naturally much more complex than has been portrayed, in that it is based on the accrual of cinematic sedimentation, one layer transforming itself on the basis of the previous, while adding to or shifting the elements according to its needs. The global cinema industry is a giant network of multiple lines of citation, increasing in its manifold turns and returns, connections and reconnections, particularly as cinematic cultural production intensifies through time. Hence, Tan See Kam takes necessary umbrage at Bordwell's linear formulation of a Hong Kong-Hollywood-Hong Kong "plagiarism"[31] by arguing that both Hollywood and Hong Kong cinemas have "been produced by, and [are] productive of, the interplay between internal

and external forces, filmic, cultural or otherwise" and that "film-artisans from different cultures have used the medium differently, and for different purposes."[32]

This depiction of cinema as a transnational capitalist production of postmodern pastiche and hybridity, marked by interpenetrating and crosscutting loops of citationality, is not impervious to the shaping influences of global cultural politics. Derrida draws out parenthetically, in his discussion of the mark's "iterability," the etymological connotations of the term: "*iter* . . . comes from *itara*, *other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows may be read as the exploitation of the logic which links repetition to alterity."[33] This connection to Otherness proffers us the idea that cinematic citationality does not flatten out cultural power distinctions, but works through them and sometimes reinforces them, a lesson Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also offers us in her critique of the politics of cultural translation of the postcolonial text:

> In the act of wholesale translation into English there can be a betrayal of the democratic ideal into the law of the strongest. This happens when all the literature of the Third World gets translated into a sort of with-it translatese, so that the literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan. The rhetoricity of Chinese and Arabic! The cultural politics of high-growth, capitalist Asia-Pacific, and devastated West Asia! Gender difference inscribed and inscribing in these differences![34]

To study effectively this "with-it translatese" generated by the Chinese presence in Hollywood is to undertake an analysis of the cinema-studies version of what Mary Louise Pratt has so fruitfully described as "transculturation," a term ethnographers deploy "to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture."[35] The cultural spaces of cinematic production, distribution, and consumption become "contact zones," "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."[36] The uneven cultural, financial, and political power dynamics in these cinematic contact zones engage an overlapping of Hollywood's projection (on behalf of mainstream America) of an ethnic Otherness on the Chinese, and of the latter's "autoethnography" of Chineseness, a mode of self-representation to suit and engage Hollywood's ideological and cultural conditions.[37] It is in these power differentials and uneven levels of cultural/institutional agencies (often to the disadvantage of the Chinese newcomer) that one can distinguish between the cross-cultural citationality, seen in the Chinese-in-Hollywood phenomenon;

and the sort of cinematic citationality theorized in postmodernist/poststructuralist conceptions of cinema in general.

My critical approach to these cinematic representations of Chineseness and related cultural issues, is to take on the globalized Chinese presence in American and transnational Chinese cinemas as a "problematic," a concept theorized by Louis Althusser.[38] Through "'symptomatic' reading[s]"[39] of these films, I treat them as texts fraught with anxieties, tensions, contradictions, and conflicts produced by the uneven power-relational structures of the Chinese-Hollywood contact zones. Questions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation disturb the glossy surface of these transnational cinematic productions — for as in a problematic, what is implied or not represented is just as important as what is visible. Slippages reveal a cinematic unconscious that deserves analysis.

As I examine the construction of a celluloid Chineseness in Hollywood and the self-remaking of transnational Chinese cinemas to exploit the Hollywood paradigm for global box office success, I eschew a prescriptive notion of insisting on cultural authenticity. While historical and cultural facticity are not unimportant issues here, I wish instead to circumvent an essentialist mode of cultural interpretation by questioning less the realism and accuracy of these cultural representations and focusing more on the ideological motivations that spur the production of these images in the first place. Chineseness, as it is configured in these various cinemas, becomes a malleable entity, permitting filmmakers to mold and package it into various ideological, cultural, and aesthetic forms. This malleability is important in enabling a smooth translation of Chineseness into a product that appeals not only to a culturally less discriminating mainstream American and international audience, but also to more critical, global Chinese consumers. In light of the struggling film industries in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, a movie like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is eagerly consumed by Chinese audiences because it has the imprimatur of a Hollywood packaging. In other words, Chinese filmmakers in Hollywood have the tall order of presenting a believable formulation of Chineseness while at the same time filtering it through the dominant Hollywood paradigm.

Once Upon a Time in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong: Hollywood's Adventurism in Chinese Cinematic Histories

The next three sections of this chapter are my attempt to briefly and rather reductively (for reasons of space constraints) chart the historical contours of

the interpenetrating relationships between Hollywood and the golden triangle of "pan-Chinese cinema" — China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.[40] Such a topography will reveal three main streams of cinematic traditions and discourses that intertwine to create the present cultural climate: firstly, Hollywood's adventurism within the Chinese cinematic traditions; secondly, the racist structures of classic and contemporary Hollywood stereotypes of the Chinese; and thirdly, the Asian-American cinematic response of survival and intervention. This discussion of the Hollywood-Chinese cinematic connection foregrounds the notion that what we see as a contemporary development in Hollywood's fascination with things Chinese is not devoid of history, nor has it emerged suddenly out of a cultural vacuum. My hope is to locate this book's discussion of the Chinese in Hollywood within these larger historical and cultural contexts of Chinese and American cinemas and, thus, mark its theoretical contiguity and continuity with these histories and discourses. Because of the survey nature of these sections, advanced students of these cinemas may choose instead to proceed to the final segment where I map out the themes of the book's chapters.

The Asia-Pacific rim, as a zone of cinematic cultural production, has seen an American capitalist encroachment in terms of film distribution and consumption and, to a lesser but growing degree, film production, since cinema's inception. Throughout this century-long history, the relationships that have developed between Hollywood and Chinese cinemas have been ambivalent ones, with the latter fighting off Hollywood hegemony at their respective national box-offices on one hand, and developing a complex network of financial, technological, aesthetic, and cultural interconnections on the other. America has had a historic role in introducing cinema as a capitalist enterprise in China. About a year and a half after the Lumière brothers' inaugural Paris screenings of their film shorts, American James Ricalton accomplished this in 1897 when he screened in Shanghai the Thomas Edison films.[41] Working for the Edison company as a photographer, Ricalton also later traveled to British Hong Kong to capture the city in the form of documentary shorts, which were then brought back to the United States.[42] Together, these landmark moments offer the beginnings of cross-cultural cinematic exchanges and influences. Another important pioneering figure in the early Los Angeles-Shanghai-Hong Kong cinema connection was Benjamin Brodsky, who helped set up the Asia Film Company in Shanghai. Arriving in Hong Kong, Brodsky produced a number of shorts, including Li Minwei's *Zhuangzi Tests His Wife* (1913), which he brought back to Los Angeles to be screened.[43] According to Law Kar, "Brodsky came to the Far East to make money out of the film business and may have never been conscious of his

pioneering role. He had inspired a group of young Chinese idealists who founded the local film industry."[44] Before World War II and the Communist control of mainland China, Hollywood was already eyeing China as a huge market for its products and sought capitalist control, especially in Shanghai. In fact, the US government saw Hollywood adventurism overseas as a means to bring American culture, values, beliefs, and capitalist ideology to the rest of the world. When asked about China in 1926, Dr. Julius Klein, who led the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, noted that movies are "invaluable in all markets where there is a high percentage of illiteracy among the people, for from the pictures they see they get their impression of how we live, the clothes we wear, and so forth . . . I can cite you instances of the expansion of trade in the Far East, traceable directly to the effects of the motion picture."[45] The Chinese naturally perceived in nationalist terms Hollywood's presence as a challenge to the nation's nascent film industry. It did not help Hollywood's cause in China when its filmic imagery of the Chinese tended to be predominantly negative in its racial stereotyping.

In his fascinating study of Chinese film censorship and its relationship to anti-imperialist sentiments in the 1920s and 1930s, Zhiwei Xiao examines instances where censorship and nationalism worked hand in hand to resist Hollywood domination of the film market in Shanghai and the rest of China. In 1930, public protests shut down screenings of Harold Lloyd's *Welcome Danger* (1929).[46] Because "the Chinese characters in this film are all presented as stupid, ridiculous, and uncouth," the film was eventually banned in China.[47] Between 1931 and 1938, the National Film Censorship Committee "adopted an unflinching stand toward both offensive foreign films and foreign film studio activities in China."[48] Xiao deduces from the committee's censorship practices the following approach, which remained unstated on an official level: objectionable elements included "China [represented] as a backward country and her people as an uncivilized race; scenes in which the Chinese appeared as villains, as morally corrupt (smoking opium and gambling), or even as servants; and dialogue that ridiculed the Chinese and the Chinese way of life or referred to the Chinese in a less than respectable way."[49] Because China was (and is even more so today) a very important market to Hollywood, major American studios had to compromise in their dealings to secure their slice of the Chinese pie. Columbia Pictures acquiesced to demands for cuts made to Frank Capra's *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* (1933); Samuel Goldwyn had on their production set of Sidney Franklin's *The Good Earth* (1937) a Chinese censorship committee member; Paramount Pictures' dangling of US$15 million to procure Chinese film studios was subverted by nationalist intervention; and

a collusion between American and Chinese investors to create in Shanghai an "Oriental Hollywood" was similarly scuttled.[50] On the other hand, Hollywood domination of the Chinese box office was definitely established in this period, right until World War Two. Hollywood films triumphed mostly in Shanghai while the "hinterland cities" were less receptive of them.[51] An important observation to make here is the fact that this strain of nationalist criticism of Hollywood cinema has reemerged in contemporary form, with Hollywood's renewed domination of the Chinese market. Chinese unhappiness with *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Memoirs of a Geisha* are just two recent examples.

Under the aegis of British capitalist colonialism, the Hong Kong film industry developed a comparatively more collaborative relationship with Hollywood, despite the competition for box-office dollars. Hong Kong cinema can also trace its trans-Pacific connection to the Chinese diaspora, particularly among Chinese immigrants in America's Chinatowns, who constituted a significant audience sector to which Hong Kong films needed to appeal. In fact, the first Cantonese sound film made was Joe Chiu's *Romance of the Songsters*, through the production company Grandview.[52] Law Kar provides a wonderfully intricate account of Grandview, which was established in 1933 in San Francisco by Joe Chiu and Moon Kwan Man-ching, both of whom were China-born, educated in the United States, and had film-related experience in Hollywood.[53] Chiu's *Romance of the Songsters* has the distinction of being "one of the first films to depict the lives of overseas American-Chinese."[54] With financial support coming from San Francisco, Chiu and Kwan later went on to set up Grandview in Hong Kong, which would become one of the four major Hong Kong film companies in the late 1930s.[55] What is significant, in Law's estimation, of Grandview's history is that it demonstrated how early film production culture was very much "an *interflow* of people and resources between two geographical locations."[56]

Because the exciting and complex history of Hong Kong as a Hollywood of the East is beyond the scope of this short historical overview, I refer readers to Stephen Teo's magisterial account of the various film production companies in Hong Kong from the post-World War II period to the 1970s, especially the Motion Picture and General Investment (MP and GI, or Cathay), Shaw Brothers, and Golden Harvest.[57] As the Hong Kong film industry entered the competitive big-studio model, mega studios like Shaw Brothers produced with assembly-line efficiency, films of a variety of popular genres that appealed to mass audiences in Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora. Run Run Shaw, who headed film production in Hong Kong, knew his target audiences and their specific cultural/political environment of cinematic consumption. He had "different versions of a film for different markets with varying degrees of

censorship: three versions were made, the 'hottest' for the US, Europe and Japan, the 'mildest' for Singapore and Malaysia, and the 'moderate' for Hong Kong."[58] While Shaw did attempt to access the mainstream American market, he was only successful catering to the Chinese community and to Asian cinema enthusiasts. Martial arts cinema, of course, had the strongest appeal, particularly to the African American community in the 1970s (see Chapters Five and Six); and it did have a brief phase where mainstream American audiences experienced what David Desser calls a "kung fu craze."[59] Hong Kong cinema not only introduced new filmic genres and visual aesthetics to America, but Hollywood also offered filmic models for Hong Kong to appropriate and reconfigure for its own purposes. Yingjin Zhang correctly assesses that "by the late 1970s Hong Kong cinema had gained the flexibility of crossing national and regional borders and the advantage of assimilating east and west as well as north and south."[60] This mode of cinematic citationality we see intensified in the contemporary Chinese presence in Hollywood.

One cannot talk about martial arts films in the 1970s without referencing Bruce Lee and his impact on Hollywood-Chinese cinema relationships. As Stephen Teo's portrayal of Lee confirms: "No other figure in Hong Kong cinema has done as much to bring East and West together in a common sharing of culture as Bruce Lee in his short lifetime. In him, Hong Kong cinema found its most forceful ambassador; an Asian role model espousing aspects of an Eastern culture who found receptive minds in the West."[61] For the ethnic Chinese, Lee embodied in his films "an abstract kind of cultural nationalism"[62] that challenged Western (and even Japanese) imperialism, thereby transforming Lee into an appealing icon to audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan,[63] Southeast Asia, and the Chinese communities across America. He even had a strong following among African Americans. His version of a Chinese masculinity subverted and challenged the older American stereotypes of Asian passivity and submissiveness.[64] Besides his "kung fu style and methods," his "sex appeal and magnetic personality," "to the West, Lee is a narcissistic hero who makes Asian culture more accessible."[65]

Bruce Lee's dramatic film career began when he left Hollywood (see my brief discussion of this in Chapter Six in the context of *Kill Bill*) for Hong Kong to take up Golden Harvest's offer to make his films. *The Big Boss* (1971) and *Fist of Fury* (1972) exploded onto global screens to tremendous applause. In fact, *The Big Boss*, released as *Fists of Fury* in the US, reached number one at the American box office on May 1973, with two other kung fu films rounding off the top three, Golden Harvest's *Deep Thrust – the Hand of Death* (1972) and Shaw's *King Boxer* (1972), re-titled as *Five Fingers of Death*.[66]

The Way of the Dragon (1972) followed, with Chuck Norris adding further American appeal to the film, signaling an acknowledgment of Lee's crossover potential to an American market. Warner Brothers jumped into the production fray in its collaboration with Hong Kong producers to make *Enter the Dragon* (1973)[67] with director Robert Clouse at the helm. The studio continued sporadic involvement with Hong Kong studios to collaborate on cross-cultural projects, such as *Cleopatra Jones and the Casino of Gold* (1975 with Shaw) and Clouse's *The Big Brawl* (1980 with Golden Harvest) starring Jackie Chan in his first crossover attempt into the American market. Other American-Hong Kong collaborations also created films like the B-flick *The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* (1974; a Hammer-Shaw co-production),[68] *Shatter* (1974; Hammer-Shaw) featuring Ti Lung as one of the leads,[69] and *The Cannonball Run* (1981 with Golden Harvest) with Jackie Chan and Michael Hui as part of an ensemble cast. Finally, another important role that Bruce Lee played was that he helped create the conditions for the rise of Jackie Chan as a transnational superstar,[70] whose films and career I discuss in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

From 1978 to the late 1980s, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan witnessed dramatic political changes that would not only transform the film industries but also set the stage for the new global Chinese presence in Hollywood in the new millennium. Deng Xiaoping's "Open-Door" economic policies in China, the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 for the Hong Kong handover, and the 1987 lifting of martial law in KMT-controlled Taiwan all created the political, economic, and cultural conditions for "new waves"[71] of pan-Chinese cinemas: the Hong Kong New Wave, the Taiwan New Cinema, and the Chinese Fifth Generation Filmmakers. These rich streams of cinematic creativity would flood the world market through the global network of film festivals,[72] parading Chinese cinematic wares not only to film critics and cinephiles, but also to American filmmakers, distributors, and studio executives.

The works of the Fifth Generation directors, filmmakers who graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 1982, constitute the "New Chinese Cinema."[73] A beneficiary of Deng Xiaoping's economic liberalization policies, the academy reopened its doors in 1978 to its fifth-generation students, "its first post-'cultural revolution' intake."[74] What was crucial about Deng's policies was that their focus on "market forces" created a new capitalist ethos for the new filmmakers to make sense of.[75] Filmmakers like Zhang Junzhao, Chen Kaige, Zhang Yimou, and Tian Zhuangzhuang were soon gaining international critical attention as art-house filmmakers, with Chen and Zhang Yimou later going on to become commercially important directors whose work

found receptive audiences in the United States. After his critically significant *Yellow Earth* (1984), Chen Kaige proceeded to bring down the house at Cannes with *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), only to follow up with lesser films like *Temptress Moon* (1996), *The Emperor and the Assassin* (1998), and *The Promise* (2005). Zhang Yimou similarly took the art-house-to-pop-cinema route from films likes *Judou* (1990) and *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), to his more recent *wuxia* flicks. I look specifically at Zhang Yimou's *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004) in Chapter Four, while I situate Chen Kaige's *The Promise* in the context of Chinese supernaturalism in Chapter Seven.

The two portmanteau films that marked the beginnings of the Taiwan New Cinema were *The Sandwich Man* (1983) and *In Our Time* (1982), the latter featuring a segment directed by Edward Yang, while the former had Hou Hsiao-hsien contributing one section.[76] Joining Hou and Yang were other new Taiwanese directors whose cinematic output though smaller than their Hong Kong counterparts, still made their mark at major international film festivals, with Hou's *City of Sadness* (1989) picking up the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, the first Chinese film to win this award.[77] The Taiwan New Cinema, though short-lived, paved the way for global and Hollywood interest in filmmakers like Tsai Mingliang, Chen Kuofu (whose 2002 *Double Vision* I examine in Chapter Seven) and, of course, Ang Lee.[78] Trained in New York University's film school, Lee proved his ability to straddle effectively both the cultural East-West divide and the art-house-Hollywood aesthetic sensibilities. Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), I argue in Chapter Four, signaled the global rise of the *wuxia pian*. His growing body of work, including Hollywood class acts like the Academy-Award winning *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), made him an incredibly marketable filmmaker to mainstream American audiences, Chinese audiences around the world, and, of course, Taiwanese audiences, who happily celebrated their native son's triumph in Hollywood.[79]

The Hong Kong New Wave and Second Wave cinemas represented frenetic bursts of creativity, as they jolted Hong Kong cinema into fresh new directions. This cinematic vitality and aesthetic ingenuity are what Hollywood now sees as fresh blood that it can inject into its tired rehashing of action cinema. (Again, the irony here is that some critics believe that it is *the West* that influenced Hong Kong cinema during the post-World War Two period and, therefore, the New Wave does not really exist.[80] The notion of cinematic citationality may provide an alternative theoretical means to rethink notions of cinematic originality.[81]) The New and Second Wave directors now constitute the mainstays of Hong Kong cinema, with many making the move to

Hollywood since 1997. The incredibly prolific Tsui Hark has close to forty films to his directorial credit, including the highly successful Wong Fei-hong series *Once Upon a Time in China*, which catapulted Jet Li into international superstardom and onto the Hollywood stage. Tsui himself made two Hollywood forays, *Double Team* (1997) and *Knock Off* (1998), both of which were Jean-Claude Van Damme vehicles, before deciding to concentrate on Hong Kong productions. Van Damme's fascination with Hong Kong directors continued with *Maximum Risk* (1996), *Replicant* (2001), and *In Hell* (2003), all helmed by Ringo Lam. Leong Po-chih directed Jude Law in *The Wisdom of Crocodiles* (1998) before proceeding to mainly American television and direct-to-video movies. Taking on both horror and action genres, Ronny Yu added his touch to *Bride of Chucky* (1998), *The 51st State* (2001), and *Freddy vs. Jason* (2003), and then turning around to make the excellent *Huo Yuan Jia*, or *Fearless* (2006), starring Jet Li. Of all the directors to make the Hollywood crossover, John Woo is probably the most commercially successful. Beginning with Universal's *Hard Target* (1993), Woo went on to clinch Hollywood mega-blockbuster deals, such as *Broken Arrow* (1996), *Face/Off* (1997), *Mission: Impossible II* (2000), *Windtalkers* (2002), and *Paycheck* (2003). As with Jet Li and Tsui Hark, Woo's classic crime films *A Better Tomorrow* (1986) and *The Killer* (1989) put Chow Yun-fat on the map of transnational Chinese cinemas, making the latter's move into Hollywood a smooth one. Wong Kar-wai, the art-house film-festival darling, joined the group with his critically celebrated Hong Kong works like *Chungking Express* (1994), *Happy Together* (1997), *In the Mood for Love* (2000), and *2046* (2004); and has now taken on two Studio Canal productions, the recently released *My Blueberry Nights* (2007) and the in-pre-production remake of *The Lady from Shanghai* (2010). A number of newer filmmakers have also dipped their feet in the Hollywood pool: Kirk Wong's *The Big Hit* (1998), Peter Chan's *The Love Letter* (1999), and Stanley Tong's *Mr. Magoo* (1997) — Tong was also responsible for *Rumble in the Bronx* (1995), Jackie Chan's breakout hit in the US. It is interesting to note here that while commercial film directors make the direct leap into Hollywood, the art-house directors naturally take the international film festival route before crossing into Hollywood mainstream when the time is right for them to do so.

My brief but strategically emphatic gallop through the rich and multifaceted histories of pan-Chinese cinema brings us now to the post-1997 present where transnational Chinese cinema has transmogrified into this multi-tentacled creature that entwines itself to Hollywood, together spawning varied versions of celluloid Chineseness, which this book confronts as its main critical challenge.

"Yellow Peril" and the Model Minority: Hollywood's Chinese Stereotypes

"A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away . . ." is undoubtedly the most memorable opening line in science fiction cinema history. It serves as the prelude to all six *Star Wars* films, the first of which is *Star Wars* (1977), the film that launched what has been called the "cult blockbuster" phenomenon,[82] with its spectacular marketing and merchandising paraphernalia.[83] The film's cultural impact, hence, cannot be underestimated, considering the way the series creates for its audience a fantasy space of a mythic reality that is not of this world and yet parallels the human experience that *is* of this world. In this sense, the fantastical distancing of "a galaxy far, far away" in no way reduces the very real structuring presence of the cultural politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, and political ideology in America.[84]

When George Lucas proudly unveiled *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* in 1999, Asian Americans decried the ethnic stereotypes of Asians as a throwback to the older Hollywood representations. The Trade Viceroy Nute Gunray, one of the villainous non-human characters, is spotted speaking English with a suspiciously Asian sounding accent that could easily be mistaken as Chinese in its inflections. One could conveniently dismiss such a reading as a form of ethnic over-sensitivity; but Ed Guerrero's analysis of the first *Star Wars* movie convincingly demonstrates how these films can reveal, rather symptomatically, the conditions of race relations in America:

> The film's construction of race relations arises out of tensions and contestations located in the social here and now . . . But the stark realization of the possibility of a "final solution" to earth's color problem is emphasized in *Star Wars*, in that white people, particularly white males, are constructed as the sole and sovereign human norm, contrasted to "Wookies" and an assorted myriad of exotic creatures and humanoids, especially as depicted in the film's memorable bar scene. Enhancing the film's hierarchical subordination of racial types, *Star Wars* utilizes the mechanism of displacement to recruit and transpose into robots and nonhuman Wookies the friendly "colored" sidekicks, the Tontos, Birmingham Browns, and Nigger Jims of the action-adventure thrillers and novels of America's filmic and literary past. And in much the same way that these sidekicks have always provided emotional comfort in all of the dominant cinema's genres, these alien, exotic, noncompetitive, desexualized contrasts to the reigning "norm" of whiteness continue to be understanding nonwhite "buddies" in times of sharply politicized racial discourse.[85]

The point here is not to label the film series as "racist" per se, but to map the political unconscious[86] of racial socialization that permeates much of contemporary Hollywood cinema. Even in 1999, during an era of multicultural awareness, *Star Wars* characters like Jar Jar Binks and the Trade Viceroy Nute Gunray still come off as racial caricatures locked into the ideological forms of the assimilated non-white or the menacing alien respectively.

What I draw from Guerrero's splendid analysis is also the realization that the racial unconscious forms a cinematic continuum. Racial images of the Chinese, for example, move through distinct phases of Hollywood depiction in accordance with the political and social perceptions of the Chinese throughout American history. The Chinese in the reconfigured form of the alien Trade Viceroy assume an economic menace, not unlike the political and public fears that the People's Republic of China, as a rising global economic powerhouse, might threaten American capitalist might and hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region. Important to consider also is Guerrero's observation that racial stereotypes undergo transmutation into cinematic forms to fit the times, though remaining stereotypes nonetheless. These are significant lessons to keep in mind as one considers the cultural politics of Chinese representation in its new presence within contemporary Hollywood and American cinema.

A number of substantial critical works on the subject of Hollywood stereotypes of Asians were produced beginning as early as the 1950s.[87] A central theme that one gathers from all these works is that the creation of Asian stereotypes and their reproduction on the big screen were enabled by the political conditions of the times, specifically America's trans-Pacific political and military adventurism, and the gradually changing attitudes towards Asian immigrants within the US. While these stereotypes sadly constitute a handsome list, I have chosen to highlight only a select few, with strategic attention placed on their specific relevance to the Chinese and a possible connection to the new post-1997 presence.

The power of cinema lies in its ability to involve the vicarious gaze of its audience, a gaze that is often projected onto a constructed figure of Otherness, be it national, ethnic, gendered, sexualized, or cultural. One of the reasons why Laura Mulvey's analysis of cinematic scopophilia in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"[88] had such an impact on contemporary cinema studies is that it engenders discussion of cinema as a phantasmic libidinal space for the construction of alterity to ease anxieties, raise fears as and when necessary, and basically reinforce ideological positions. The formulations of a mythic cinematic Chineseness in recognizable stereotypes and racist clichés ameliorate fears of an invading "alien" culture through visual and narrative containment,

particularly by means of the classic Hollywood happy ending where white normality is felicitously restored in America.[89]

This particular tendency in American film one can trace back to cinema's beginnings. In an impressive essay investigating films by both the Thomas Edison company and the American Mutoscope and Biograph, produced between 1898 and 1908 with titles like *Dancing Chinamen*, *Marionettes* (1898), *Chinese Rubbernecks* (1900), and *The Deceived Slumming Party* (1908),[90] Sabine Haenni demonstrates how these early images of malleable Chinese bodies and of New York City's Chinatown as an exotic tourist space allowed white audiences to "pleasurably experience the newly racialized metropolis by simultaneously consolidating a new kind of 'white' hegemony, and by assigning the Chinese to a limited and constrained space."[91] In other words, Chinatown was turned into a living ethnographic museum, where quick jaunts through it provided the viewer with a Ripley's-believe-it-or-not experience, with speed creating a protective distance from actual human contact. Film as a, then, new media technology furnished a further distancing effect for audiences to experience Chinatown without the consequences or the responsibilities of physical contact. Considering that almost a century has passed since the production of these early film clips, Haenni's argument still resonates for contemporary films like *The Corruptor* (1999), which I analyze in Chapter Five in specific relation to the triad presence in New York City's Chinatown.

An integral fact to keep in mind is that cinema rose as a popular American cultural art form during an intense period of anti-Chinese public sentiments: the Chinese Exclusion Act received President Chester Arthur's signature in 1882 despite his opposition to it, because both houses of Congress passed Representative Horace Page's bill in indication of general public support of these anti-Chinese measures.[92] For, in the public imagination throughout the fin de siècle period and the early twentieth century, the figure of the Chinese transmogrified from that of the pigtailed "coolie," the Chinese indentured laborer, to that of the "deviant" and the "yellow peril," according to Robert G. Lee's taxonomic categorization of "the six faces of the Oriental."[93] Gina Marchetti proffers a culturally incisive definition of the yellow peril:

> Rooted in medieval fears of Genghis Khan and Mongolian invasions of Europe, the yellow peril combines racist terror of alien cultures, sexual anxieties, and the belief that the West will be overpowered and enveloped by the irresistible, dark, occult forces of the East. Given that knowledge about Asia and Asians has been limited in Europe and America, much of this formulation necessarily rests on a fantasy that projects Euroamerican desires

> and dreads onto the alien other. Thus, as Western nations began to carve up Asia into colonies, their own imperialist expansion was in part rationalized by the notion that a militarily powerful Asia posed a threat to "Christian civilization."[94]

Her description accurately frames the yellow peril as a mode of Orientalism inflected by Euro-American colonialist and imperialist discourses.[95]

One of the most nefarious yellow peril creations is none other than the character of Dr. Fu Manchu. In light of the Orientalist discourses of British colonialism, it comes as no surprise that Fu Manchu sprang out of the British popular literary imagination.[96] Born in 1883 in Birmingham, England, as Arthur Henry Ward, Sax Rohmer penned thirteen novels featuring Fu Manchu. As Eugene Franklin Wong recounts, Rohmer immersed himself in Limehouse, the area of London where the original Chinatown was first located, to gain inspiration for his famous literary creation.[97] Hollywood came a-calling and the rest was cinematic history. From the 1920s to the 1960s, the doings of the evil doctor filled the big screen, and later, television, with major studios like Paramount and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer jumping on the Chinese bandwagon and cashing in on the yellow peril scare embodied by Fu Manchu. Boris Karloff, famous for his portrayals of Frankenstein's monster in the James Whale movies, took his turn in MGM's *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932).[98] The last English-language Fu Manchu films I am aware of had Christopher Lee play the title character: *The Vengeance of Fu Manchu* (1967), *The Blood of Fu Manchu* (1968), and *The Castle of Fu Manchu* (1969). (It is irresistible to point out here that Shaw Brothers helped co-produce *The Vengeance of Fu Manchu*, adding again to its stable of B-movie international collaborations. Once more, profit triumphed over cultural nationalism in the global film industry.)

The *Flash Gordon* films also delivered a science fiction version of the Fu Manchu character in the form of Ming the Merciless. Robert Barshay's description of him demonstrates a clear parallel between the two villains: "Such is the villain in *Flash Gordon* — a trident bearded, slanty eyed, shiny doomed [sic], pointy nailed, arching eyebrowed, exotically garbed Oriental named Ming, who personifies unadulterated evil . . . [Ming] is the product of perhaps the richest and longest tradition of all of Hollywood's ethnic [racial] stereotypes, one which has spawned many grotesque offspring and conceived innumerable variations of deformity."[99] Could one of its most recent offspring be the pirate captain Sao Feng in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, whose image bears an uncanny resemblance to that of its wicked predecessors? My point here is not to advocate a superficial form of cinematic comparison

as criticism, but rather to reinforce again the imagistic continuities the character of Sao Feng establishes with the various racist, anti-Chinese discourses of the past that had helped to produce its filmic ancestry, something that filmmakers must continually guard against.

Part of the discursive danger that Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless were meant to pose was their sexual appetite for white female flesh, a desire invoking the fears of miscegenation. Through her expert readings of early Hollywood films such as D. W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* (1919), Marchetti demonstrates how these film "narratives use the fantasy of rape and the possibility of lynching to reaffirm the boundaries of a white-defined, patriarchal, Anglo-American culture."[100] The libidinal forces of Fu Manchu and Ming the Merciless were not only disrupted by the last minute heroics of the white savior, but their erotic inclinations seemed also to have emerged out of the shadows of the grotesquely "perverse" sexual aura, with which Hollywood was wont to imbue its "queer" villains. The desexualized Asian male was another common filmic method used by Hollywood to neutralize this threat to white female sexuality. Even today one is hard pressed to come up with clear instances where the Asian male hero actually wins the white female protagonist in the end,[101] as a quick survey of characters played by Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Chow Yun-fat will confirm: Jackie Chan and Jennifer Love Hewitt remain friends in *The Tuxedo*; Jet Li pairs up with the *African* American Aaliyah in *Romeo Must Die*; and Chow Yun-fat takes leave of Mira Sorvino for China in *The Replacement Killers*.

White male-Asian female romances, on the other hand, abound, with a rich Hollywood tradition for one to study: *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), *China Doll* (1958), and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960) specifically featured Chinese women in love with white male heroes. Inhabiting this fantasy world of the white heterosexual male gaze is a passively submissive "Lotus Blossom or a domineering Dragon Lady."[102] These stereotypes frequently do not remain static, but morph from one form to another to engage the libidinal contingencies of the male gaze. A good instance would be Suzie Wong's transformation from the Oriental sex kitten image (as a Hong Kong prostitute) in the beginning of the film, into the sacrificial mother and submissive wife in the end.[103] Part of the white heterosexual male fantasy of the submissive Asian female also revolves around the stereotype of the Japanese "butterfly", popularized by Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, a variation on the Lotus Blossom theme, which David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* and David Cronenberg's 1993 film adaptation, have so thoroughly critiqued.

The recent cultural politics of female empowerment have further spurred the reformulation of the Dragon Lady[104] stereotype, though rather ambivalently

I might add, into the kick-ass martial artist. Michelle Yeoh as a Bond girl in *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997) marked "the reinvention of the Chinese woman warrior" who, according to Marchetti, "does not drift too far from the formulaic presentation of Asian women in Hollywood as passive but erotic 'lotus blossoms' or villainously dangerous, exotic 'dragon ladies.'"[105] Hopes for a new female heroine who not only matches up to the British colonialist relic that is James Bond, but who is also willing to resist his supposedly irresistible sexual allure, are dashed in the film's genre-conventional finale of Bond getting the girl, once again; this despite the fact that there is little or no sexual charge between Bond and Yeoh's character throughout the film. The eroticism of the kung fu fighting dragon lady here really lies in her dominatrix figuration. The powerful expressivity of the woman-warrior battles one envisions, for example, in the Michelle Yeoh-Zhang Ziyi fight scenes in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* is troublingly trivialized into erotic "cat-fights."[106] Lucy Liu's campy turn as the undercover whip-wielding dominatrix teacher figure in *Charlie's Angels* (2000) and her spectacular fight scenes with Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2003) further showcase this problematic update of the traditional Dragon Lady stereotype.

The final figure to round off this array of Hollywood's Orientalist exotica is the rotundly avuncular detective Charlie Chan. Again a literary creation, this time by American author Earl Derr Biggers, Charlie Chan appeared in a series of novels before finding his way onto cinema screens in 1926. His popularity with moviegoers was only later cemented with the film *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1931).[107] Eugene Franklin Wong explains why an America paralyzed by the yellow peril was now ready for a non-threatening Chinese lead character:

> Warner Oland . . . starred as the Chinese detective. Although Oland's personality had much to do with the success of Chan, it is likely that the final immigration measures taken by the United States Government, and the subsequent social relief accompanying the end to the Asian immigration problem, gradually provided a psychological incentive and social climate given to the acceptance of an image of a non-villainous Asian.[108]

So welcoming were audiences of Chan's benign Chineseness that his character appeared in over forty films from 1926 to 1981,[109] the last of which had Peter Ustinov inhabiting the role and confronting Angie Dickinson as the Dragon Queen. The fact that all the Fu Manchu and Charlie Chan roles were played by white actors is no coincidence; it simply testifies to the racist climate of Hollywood in its discriminatory practices of hiring and promoting few Asian actors,[110] and also to the notion that an experienced white actor could more

effectively play in yellow face these grotesque caricatures with Orientalist aplomb and hyperbole. When the last Charlie Chan film was first propositioned, Asian Americans were up in arms, with one group calling themselves the "Coalition of Asians to Nix, [sic] Charlie Chan" to express "their disapproval of the proposed film, since the two primary Chinese characters were going to be played by white American actors." Jachinson Chan concludes that the filmmaker's decision to proceed with his casting decision "exemplifies the deep rootedness of a white Charlie Chan," reinforcing the notion of white superiority.[111]

Charlie Chan fails as a "positive image" because he "embodies what Frank Chin and Jeffrey Paul Chan have termed 'racist love,' the image of an ethnic minority who unquestioningly accepts his marginal status even as he serves the social order."[112] The Charlie Chan films are, according to Kwai-Cheung Lo, "always placed in the comedy format through which the stereotypical image of the Asian male is displaced, inverted, and intermingled with European-American traits . . . Charlie Chan is depicted as virtuous, mature, rational, and skillful at solving crimes, while his Asian characteristics, such as his speech, dress, and appearance, are still comically maintained."[113] Charlie Chan, thus unpacked, reminds me of Jackie Chan's methods of mimicry, which I deal with in Chapter Six. This correlation coincides precisely with Lo's own analysis of Jackie Chan, whose film *Rush Hour*, he argues, "shamelessly revives" Charlie Chan, this time in the form of "a muscular Hong Kong body."[114] Both Charlie Chan and Jackie Chan build an unfortunate connection as exemplars of Asians as the "model minority"[115] in America.

Asian American Cinema: Survival Tactics and Critical Interventions

The "new" Chinese presence in Hollywood can now be conceptualized as a merging of the various cinematic streams: the cinemas of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, bringing robust traditions and vibrant cultures to bear on this presence; the racial typology and racist iconography produced through a century of Hollywood's reliance on Orientalist imagery, which sadly finds its contemporary revival in reconfigured Hollywood forms; and, finally, Asian American cinema, the last stream, a small but politically important one in the resistance of Hollywood's ethnic stereotypes. By using the notion of "merging," I only seek to register the possible discursive dangers of the Hollywood vortex sucking in these various streams and dissolving them into a homogenous nondescript celluloid Chineseness for transnational

consumption. Yet, by highlighting below the lessons from the political activist aspects of Asian American cinema, I am in no way prescribing this cinema's politics as the only approach to engage Hollywood's dominance; for this politics was, and is, multifaceted, and its tactics have been strategically revised through time to meet specific historical exigencies.[116] Furthermore, not all Asian American film is activism-based or is energized by a critical Asian American politics — some instances of this cinema incorporate Hollywood's stereotypes of the Chinese in their narrative and character formulations to earn mainstream acceptance (just as the various streams of Chinese cinemas are equally capable of critical responses to Hollywood's domination of global cinema). Instead, my aim here in transcribing an aspect of the cinema's historical problematics is to offer an instance where a specific cinematic culture can present alternative possibilities in resisting politically questionable discourses in mainstream cinema. (Chapter Two also illustrates this point in the context of the Hong Kong handover.)

To begin to understand the evolution of an Asian American cinema that offers critical interventions, one needs to return to the Civil Rights Movement in 1964 as the crucible of Asian American political awareness and subjectivity. Martin Luther King's efforts on behalf of African America transformed the landscape of all race relations in the United States. When racial discrimination was finally declared illegal by the US Congress in 1964, it had a ripple effect as immigration exclusion laws were also deemed discriminatory.[117] Hence, a year later, the Immigration Act of 1965 came into being, which "abolished the national-origins quotas and provided for the annual admission of 170,000 immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere and 120,000 from the Western Hemisphere."[118] The gates that were closed to Chinese immigrants were now open, permitting family reunions and a flood of new immigrants that would significantly alter the racial character of the country. Asian Americans began to reexamine their sense of identity, their place in America, their cultural connections to their former homelands, and the political possibilities of asserting their place in a nation that had sought to assimilate them and confine them to the ghettos of America's social margins. The Asian American Movement was thus conceived in the late 1960s followed by the formation of the first Asian American studies program at the University of California at Berkeley and San Francisco State University.[119] The radical politics of the Asian American Movement infused academia and the arts.

In explaining how Asian American cinema emerged out of this politics, Darrell Hamamoto observes that "independent film was but one of many expressive forms that artists adopted to oppose the cultural hegemony of the allied corporate and media industries. Along with film, self-consciously *Asian*

American writing, music, theater, fine arts, and criticism began to assert themselves against the institutionalized racism that had marginalized or excluded creative and intellectual work by Yellow people in the United States."[120] Independent cinema was often the means for Asian American filmmakers to make their mark. Much of the work that was produced during the early years was culturally politicized, engaging and challenging the stereotypes of Hollywood while constructing new artistic spaces for an Asian American expressivity and subjectivity. In her now classic essay on independent Asian American films, Renee Tajima proffers "a broad framework for looking at Asian American cinema": It is "a socially committed cinema" that is "created by a people bound by 1) race; 2) interlocking cultural and historical relations; and 3) a common experience of western domination;" and is also "characterized by diversity shaped through 1) national origin; and 2) the constant flux of new immigration flowing from a westernizing East into an easternizing West."[121] In other words, this framework accommodates the heterogeneity and diversity of Asian Americans in order to challenge the homogenizing reductionism of racial stereotypes, and seeks to lock Asian America into the larger projects of radical political interventions and movements to which such a cinema is indebted.

Tajima historicizes Asian American cinema into two periods: the 1960s and 1970s together form one, while the 1980s constitute another. Out of the former period emerged "an urgent, idealistic brand of filmmaking [that] embodied the energy of the Asian American political movement and sought to be a voice for Asian American people." The latter consisted of "a period of institutionalization, pragmatism, and skills attainment, as filmmakers focused their sights on a mass audience."[122] Tajima also credits certain "Asian American media institutions" like Asian CineVision, Third World Newsreel, Visual Communications, and the Asian American Resource Workshop, among others,[123] for providing the various modes of support to enable independent Asian American filmmakers to accomplish their work. Another important organization that promotes and exhibits Asian American cinema is, of course, the Asian American International Film Festival (AAIFF), which has provided "career boosts to directors such as Wayne Wang and Ang Lee, both of whom later achieved crossover success."[124]

Chinese American directors of feature-length films make up only a handful. Two of the best known feature-length Chinese American directors go by the same last name: Peter Wang and Wayne Wang, the latter achieving greater renown than the former. Hailing from Taiwan, Peter Wang made only three films, all in the 1980s: *A Great Wall* (1986), *The Laser Man* (1988), and *First Date* (1989). Wayne Wang, on the other hand, offers one an excellent

instance of a filmmaker who displays the enviable "ability to navigate economic necessity and social perception"[125] by shuttling between Hollywood films and art-house fare, not unlike Ang Lee. In her questioning of Tajima's critique of "mainstream or studio productions as being coopted and politically suspect," Sandra Liu argues that Wang's films should be contextualized within "a complex of conflicting discourses and desires and continuously changing tactics in response to shifting material exigencies."[126] Such tactics enable Wang to stay financially afloat with commercial movies like *Slam Dance* (1987), *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), *Anywhere but Here* (1999), *Maid in Manhattan* (2002), *Because of Winn-Dixie* (2005), and *Last Holiday* (2006); while producing politically urgent and aesthetically creative films like *Chan Is Missing* (1982), *Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart* (1985), the adaptation of Louis Chu's novel *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989), the X-rated *Life is Cheap . . . But Toilet Paper Is Expensive* (1989), *Smoke* (1995), *Blue in the Face* (1995), *Chinese Box* (1997), the bizarrely kinky *The Center of the World* (2001), *A Thousand Years of Good Prayers* (2007), and *The Princess of Nebraska* (2007). In the next chapter, I consider Wayne Wang's *Chinese Box*, a not-unproblematic cinematic capturing of his former homeland Hong Kong as it momentously changed political hands from Britain to the People's Republic of China.

Apart from the two Wangs, the 1990s saw other efforts that ranged from the critically challenging to the forgettable: Shirley Sun, who co-wrote the script to *A Great Wall*, took on directing duties in *Iron and Silk* (1990); another Chinatown film is Tony Chan's *Combination Platter* (1993); V. V. Dachin Hsu made the horror film *Pale Blood* (1990) and the family comedy *My American Vacation* (1999); and actress Joan Chen made her directorial debut, the incredibly disturbing *Xiu Xiu: the Sent-Down Girl* (1998) and *Autumn in New York* (2000), starring Richard Gere and Winona Ryder. It is only with the arrival of the new millennium that one witnesses a promising group of young energetic directors who are coming into their own. While the present fascination with Chinese and Asian cinemas in Hollywood has probably worked in their favor, a wave that they have ridden to their advantage, this group's small but growing cinematic corpus does not shy away from challenging staid conceptions of the Chinese and Asians in general. Alice Wu's debut *Saving Face* (2004) and Quentin Lee's *Drift* (2000) and *Ethan Mao* (2004) assert lesbian and gay subjectivities in the face of Chinese familial disavowal of their material presence. After shining in the MTV-produced *Better Luck Tomorrow* (2002), Justin Lin went to Hollywood with *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift* (2006). His latest, *Finishing the Game* (2007), is a wonderful film about the movie industry's attempt to find Bruce Lee's

replacement immediately after his death. By playing on the same stereotypes through humor, the film unveils in a non-threatening fashion the impact of Hollywood's stereotyping of the Chinese. (The humor in *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004) and *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* (2008) functions in the same way.) These new Chinese American players seem to have appropriated Wayne Wang's tactic of straddling both commercially viable and politically avant-garde projects, the two of which may not be mutually exclusive.

As a means of winding down this extended introduction, I quote a statement from an actress and dialogue coach who has been in the American film and television business since 1981:

> The facets to Asian stereotypes, reactions to them, what to do about them are complex. Stereotyping seems an American rite of passage. People I know, upon hearing and dealing with the controversy of Asian stereotypes, have decided to use another minority to avoid it completely. This hurts us in many ways too. We're not seen, we don't work and don't serve as reminders that we are a part of the American fabric.[127]

The complex position she and many others find themselves in, which is this cutthroat business of Hollywood, exposes the material realities that the cultural hierarchies and power structures in the industry have created and imposed on minority participants of the game. Is one willing to pay the price for circumventing stereotypes and standing up against the industry's desire to return to the racist imagistic traditions of Chineseness that are being remade for a contemporary global audience? While her statement commands renewed respect for those struggling in the industry, it also reminds us of the immense cultural and political challenges the various participants of Chinese in Hollywood and the new generation of Chinese-American filmmakers and actors need to confront on a daily basis. As new filmic representations and images emerge in the future, these challenges will become an integral part of a larger historical framework within which to conceive an effective cultural politics to critique, resist, and/or engage Hollywood's hegemony.

Mapping the Chapters

The rest of the book's six chapters follow an idiosyncratic thematic progression (on account of my personal research encounters and interests) in order to isolate specific moments within the Chinese-in-Hollywood phenomenon. Chapters Two and Three, as I have noted earlier, belong together in that they offer a composite

reading of the diverse responses to the 1997 Hong Kong handover, which provides the historical point of entry for the book. Chapter Two, "Visualizing Hong Kong," examines the handover through the cinematic gazes of Hong Kong diasporic filmmakers Wong Kar-wai, Wayne Wang, and Evans Chan. Their gazes from afar enable them to grapple cathartically with an important historical moment in their homeland, as they continue to make films in and/or for America. The analysis in this chapter also asks the broader questions of cultural and diasporic identity and politics that the Chinese presence in Hollywood must ultimately face up to, a critical challenge that I present through my discussion of the film's deployment of cinematic visuality as a mode of intervention. In counterpoint to the cultural politics in Chapter Two is Chapter Three's discussion of Hollywood's response to the events through films like *Red Corner*, *Kundun*, and *Seven Years in Tibet*. These films' admirable intention of speaking up against the human rights abuses and lack of democracy evident in China is undermined by the representational excess configured through Hollywood's imaginings of China's terrifying cultural Otherness.

While the Chinese cinematic diaspora was mobilized around the 1997 handover, it is the *wuxia pian*'s (Chinese sword-fighting movie's) arrival in Hollywood in the form of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that signaled the new, sustained presence of Chinese cinema in the United States. Chapter Four, "The Global Return of the *Wuxia pian*," focuses on the strategies of cultural translation and accommodation in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Zhang Yimou's *Hero* and *House of Flying Daggers*. The desire to garner global audience appeal in all three films created deep cultural anxieties that left significant traces in the filmic texts for my analysis.

With the *wuxia pian* fueling American and global audience's thirst for Chinese action cinema, Hollywood has diversified its offerings through the crime action genre. However, cinematic representations of criminality and vice in America's Chinatowns have inevitably become a part of the genre's visual landscape, thus sustaining the way mainstream America stereotypically views the Chinese as culturally alien and morally perverse. This mode of representation has resurfaced in the form of the Chinese triads and their involvement in protection rackets, human trafficking, the drug trade, and counterfeiting. Chapter Five, "Enter the Triads," looks at Hollywood films *Lethal Weapon 4*, *The Corruptor*, *Rush Hour*, *Rush Hour 2*, and *Romeo Must Die*, and the way they situate the triads in a global/local nexus and, in turn, ethnicize them into criminally monstrous Others within the discourses of American race relations.

Chapters Six and Seven spotlight Hollywood's evolving fetishism of things Chinese. Discussing the emergence of Sino-chic through Hollywood's

appropriation of Chinese action cinema, Chapter Six looks first at how Jackie Chan works the global/local conjuncture by increasing the cinematic Americanization of his work, especially through the themes of cultural adaptation, appropriation, and acceptance of Asian migrants in the US, while simultaneously building his cosmopolitan appeal to a wide global audience, all through the processes of "mimicry as failure" in *The Tuxedo, Shanghai Noon*, and *Shanghai Knights*. The chapter then interrogates the modes of cinematic citationality in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill Vol. 1* and *2*, while at the same time professing an uneasy pleasure for the camp aesthetics in these movies. Treading through a study of the exploitation film, the female revenge genre, and various cinematic allusions to the Shaw Brothers archives, I foreground Tarantino's relishing of an ethnic cinematic chic in his reinvention of Chineseness in *Kill Bill.*

Chapter Seven, "Chinese Supernaturalism," centers on the way *Bulletproof Monk*, *Double Vision*, *The Myth*, and *The Promise* pursue a kind of mythic autoethnography, where Chinese religious beliefs and superstitions receive an intensified makeover to emphasize the bizarre, the macabre, the mystical, and the inexplicable. While all these films see it as their responsibility to bridge the East-West divide, they also ironically serve to keep the "monstrous" ethnic Other at bay by deploying ethnic supernaturalism as a cordon sanitaire. This double-edged strategy also reifies racial stereotypes and problematic cultural assumptions on issues such as ethnic assimilation in America, scientific rationalism, and cultural nationalism.

Finally, the book arrives not at a conclusion but a "coda," a musical term I use strategically to suggest the new themes and directions that future work in this area of cinema studies affords, in what I call the "Global Cinematic Technologies of Ethnic (Un)Representation."