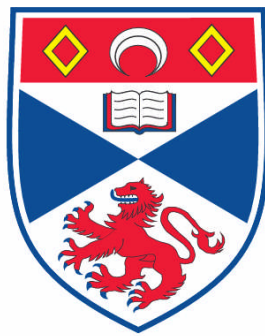# HONG KONG CINEMA 1982-2002 : THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY DURING TRANSITION

Wai Yee Ruby Cheung

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**

2008

Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002:

The Quest for Identity during Transition

Wai Yee Ruby Cheung

Thesis Submitted to the University of St Andrews for the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to interpret the cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' identity quest during a transitional state/stage related to the sovereignty transfer. The Handover transition considered is an ideological one, rather than the overnight polity change on the Handover day. This research approaches contemporary Hong Kong cinema on two fronts and the thesis is structured accordingly: Upon an initial review of the existing Hong Kong film scholarship in the Introduction, and its 1997-related allegorical readings, Part I sees new angles (previously undeveloped or underdeveloped) for researching Hong Kong films made during 1982-2002. Arguments are built along the ideas of Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' because Hong Kong has lacked a cultural/national centrality. This part of research is informed by the ideas of Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, and the diasporic experiences of Ien Ang, Rey Chow and Ackbar Abbas. With these new research angles and references to the circumstances, Part II reads critically the text of eight Hong Kong films made during the Handover transition. In chronological order, they are *Boat People* (Hui, 1982), *Song of the Exile* (Hui, 1990), *Days of Being Wild* (Wong, 1990), *Happy Together* (Wong, 1997), *Made in Hong Kong* (Chan, 1997), *Ordinary Heroes* (Hui, 1999), *Durian Durian* (Chan, 2000), and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (Chan, 2002). They meet several criteria related to the undeveloped / underdeveloped areas in the existing Hong Kong film scholarship. Hamid Naficy's 'accented cinema' paradigm gives the guidelines to the film analysis in Part II. This part shows that Hong Kongers' self-transformation during transition is alterable, indeterminate, and interminable, due to the people's situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness'. This thesis thus contributes to Hong Kong cinema scholarship in interpreting films with new research angles, and generating new insights into this cinematic tradition and its wider context.

DECLARATIONS

I, Wai Yee Ruby Cheung, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 92,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date <u>13 November 2007</u>   Signature of Candidate _____

I was admitted as a research student in February 2005 (credited with 1 year of part-time study at the University of Leicester) and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in June 2005; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2005 and 2007.

Date <u>13 November 2007</u>   Signature of Candidate _____

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date <u>13 November 2007</u>   Signature of Supervisor _____

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I, Wai Yee Ruby Cheung, received particular assistance in the writing of this thesis in respect of matters of style, idiom, grammar, syntax or spelling, which was provided by Kerry Tavakoli.

Date 13 November 2007   Signature of Candidate _____

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>

Due to the topic of this research, my PhD study gave me an opportunity to revisit the first part of my life, and what I have missed but now rediscovered. It also witnessed some of the darkest periods in my life (for example, the death of my maternal grandmother). Yet it was also because of my research that I have met many people whose unconditional and generous assistance and advice mean much to me.

Words definitely fail me in expressing my gratitude. Thanks should go first to the University of St Andrews for sponsoring my PhD study. The highest level of gratitude should go to my two supervisors, Professor Dina Iordanova and Dr David Martin-Jones, whose academic guidance throughout the past few years has helped me develop into a confident researcher. Their care and concern for me personally have also reduced much of the loneliness I experienced being away from home. I am grateful to other academics in the Department of Film Studies for their friendship and encouragement. I would like to thank our department secretary Karen Drysdale for her unfailing administrative support and more importantly, her friendship. I value the mutual support and friendship from my fellow PhD students of film, especially Canan Balan, David Fleming, Jennie Holmes, Lars Kristensen, and James Stedman.

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In loving memory of my maternal grandparents

whose diasporic lives have inspired my research and to whom I dedicate this thesis.

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NOTES ON CHINESE NAMES, TITLES AND TRANSLATION, AND STYLE GUIDE

1. Chinese Names

In order to preserve the versatility of romanizing Chinese names, in this thesis I preserve their most commonly known spellings in either Cantonese, pinyin, Wade-Giles, or specific manners of romanization. Surnames usually come first for Chinese romanization, while those individuals who have adopted the Western format for their names have their surnames last. I signify people's surnames by capitalizing them only the first time their names are mentioned in the main text of this thesis (not endnotes, even if their names may appear in the endnotes first), for example, Ann HUI. Thereafter, I refer to them by mentioning their surnames in title case, for example, Hui.

If the names (for example, of critics/reviewers) appear only in the endnotes and not in the main text, their surnames are capitalized in the endnotes on first appearance.

For Cantonese names, surnames are followed by hyphenated forenames, for example, WONG Kar-wai (with surname capitalized on first appearance). This also applies to Wile-Giles names, for example, WU Nien-jen. For pinyin names, surnames are followed by un-hyphenated forenames, for example, CHEN Kaige.

As for those who share the same surname, for example, Fruit Chan and Peter Chan, when I refer to their names after they first appear in this thesis, I mention only their surnames to refer to those who come first in this thesis; while forenames and surnames for those who come later. For example, I mention 'Chan' throughout this thesis to refer to Fruit Chan because his name appears

early on in this thesis, whereas I refer to 'Peter Chan' to signify Peter Chan because his name comes much later.

2. Titles and Translation

Hong Kong or Chinese film titles (for example, *Touben Nuhai / Boat People*; see also section 3 below on 'Presentation of film title'), and Chinese-language books / magazines (for example, *Xu Anhua Shuo Xu Anhua / Ann Hui on Ann Hui*), are written in both pinyin and English on their first appearance in this thesis (or in the endnotes where appropriate), and are in italics. A remark in round brackets indicates that the books / magazines are written in Chinese. Thereafter, only English titles are used.

In addition, on the first appearance of Chinese-language books / magazines in the bibliography, both pinyin and English titles are used. Thereafter in the bibliography, titles are cited in English only (as in the case of those edited volumes).

Individual articles in Chinese-language magazines, journals, collections, programmes and newspapers are cited with translated titles (in English only) on all appearances, with a remark in round brackets indicating that the original is in Chinese. For example, FONG Wah, '1990s Hong Kong Films in Retrospect' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 475 (26 June – 9 July 1997), 31-39 (p. 35).

3. Style Guide

Owing to the requirements of the School of Modern Languages, where I started my PhD study at the University of St Andrews, *MHRA Style Guide* (2002 Edition; repr. 2004) is adopted as a guideline for the style and presentation of this thesis. However, as the style guide is for general purposes and may not cover some of the specific areas that I attend to in this thesis, I list below the areas that I develop in the *MHRA Style Guide* and maintain them consistently throughout this thesis.

- References: All references to given printed and/or online sources are put in endnotes (which are placed at the end of each chapter) in full version on first appearance for both direct quotations and paraphrases. For example: Ackbar Abbas, 'Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics', in *Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. by Esther M.K. Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China), 2004), pp. 273-296 (pp. 284-285).

- Later references in this thesis are shortened as, for example, Abbas, 'Other Histories, Other Politics', p. 287. They are placed in endnotes.

- References to articles in newspapers and magazines: Since most of my information was obtained via the websites of individual newspapers and/or magazines, page numbers of the articles from these sources are not available, and therefore are not shown in the references and bibliography in this thesis. URLs are shown instead whenever they are available.

- Presentation of film title: On first appearance, the film title is presented in pinyin (or original titles in cases of non-Chinese-language films) to be followed by their English translation (see also section 2 above on 'Titles and Translation'). The film title is then followed by the director's name, country of origin, and the year of release, all in round brackets. For

example, *Touben Nuhai / Boat People* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1982). For later references, only the English title is used. Year of release may/may not be referred to again in later mention, depending on the context. Both pinyin (or original titles of non-Chinese-language films) and English titles of the films are listed in the filmography.

- Names of protagonists in films that are closely analysed are followed by the actors/actresses' names in round brackets, for example, Hueyin (Maggie Cheung), only when the protagonists are first mentioned without preceding information on the actors/actresses.

- Use of italics is for the purpose of emphasizing the word/phrase in particular context; whereas quotation marks set off word or phrase that embodies specific concepts, for example, 'home' and 'homeland', or to separate the word/phrase from the context (see below the note on 'Abbreviations').

- Abbreviations: 'aka' means 'also known as'.

- In general, numbers are spelled out. Numerals are used in the context of statistics, and in cases of events' name, for example, The 10th Hong Kong International Film Festival.

- Illustrations: While sequence numbers and captions appear below the stills from films that are closely examined in this thesis, diagrams visualizing the theoretical ideas of Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall are placed under the diagram numbers and titles for smooth textual flow. A summary of illustrations is provided in Appendix 2.

- In this thesis, when I mention a particular cinema, for example, Hong Kong cinema, I refer to the film industry that includes film production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of that particular place; whereas the word 'film' is used to refer to individual motion pictures.

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INTRODUCTION

We had six firework displays in that year [1997].

We were abandoned on that night [on 30 June 1997].

– director Fruit CHAN[1]

1. AIMS

This year – 2007 – marks the tenth anniversary of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule. From a British Crown colony to a special administrative region of China, Hong Kong means more than a birthplace to me and my contemporaries. The rapid, historical, social, cultural, economic, and political developments of this place over the past several decades have attested to the vicissitudes in many Hong Kongers' lives. Officially, Hong Kong residents shall include permanent residents (made up of ethnic Chinese and ethnic minorities such as South Asians and Europeans, who either were born in Hong Kong or have resided in Hong Kong continuously for not less than seven years), and non-permanent residents (who are allowed to live in Hong Kong for a certain period of time but do not have the right of abode). For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'Hong Kongers' refers to those ethnic Chinese residing in Hong Kong and having the right of abode in the place.

Hong Kong cinema made between 1982 and 2002 contributes tremendously to reflection and response to the apprehension, excitement and situational anxiety experienced by Hong Kongers amidst these most recent changes. This thesis thus seeks to interpret the cinematic representations of various dimensions of Hong Kongers' perplexed sense of belonging to and association with Hong Kong,[2] as well as the mentality of the period in a highly globalized

environment, all triggered conspicuously by the sovereignty transfer. In sum, it is concerned with Hong Kongers' quest for identity during the transitional state/stage with regard to the 1997 Handover, as portrayed through the medium of film.

My investigation aims to answer two research questions in particular:

Question 1: Research Approach

What are the *new angles* from which we can study Hong Kong cinema 1982-2002 afresh with regard to the influence of the 1997 Handover?

Question 2: Findings and Interpretations

What are the *new insights*, regarding Hong Kongers' quest for identity during the Handover transition, that can be discovered from studying Hong Kong cinema 1982-2002 from these new angles?

Owing to different research conditions, previous studies of contemporary Hong Kong cinema worked primarily under Western rubrics of East Asian cinemas. They were often informed by theoretical paradigms, for example, formal analysis (David Bordwell),[3] political economy (Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover),[4] or postmodernism (Poshek FU and David Desser),[5] to name but a few. The findings and interpretations of these studies are informative, yet there are still undeveloped / underdeveloped areas of research interest that merit further exploration. Under the impact of the ever-changing contexts and with more information accumulated through time, we may be able to interpret these previous findings afresh from new angles. I will address question 1 in Chapter 1. I will highlight the contribution of this research in establishing new

research angles via looking at Hong Kong Chinese's fundamental identity traits, before interpreting the cinematic representations of their 1997-related identity quest.

I am particularly interested in the unpredictable self-construction of Hong Kongers during the Handover transitional period, under the impact of different contextual factors. Hence, I am expecting to elicit new insights and provide supplementary readings by considering the peculiarities of this group of Chinese. This is the focus of question 2, which will be answered via the film analysis in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 from the abovementioned new research angles.

2. CONTEXT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANSITIONAL YEARS OF 1982-2002

The word 'identity' has a Latin origin from *idem*, indicating sameness. *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines 'identity' as 'who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group which make them different from others'.[6] *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* offers a similar definition for the word as 'the distinguishing character or personality of an individual'.[7] These descriptions consider someone/something's distinctiveness relative to some other people or things. They also imply that any identity and identification have to be *contextualized* to make sense.

Hence, in order to answer the two research questions that have motivated this study of Hong Kongers' self-construction shown in films made during the sovereignty transitional period, I will introduce in the first two sub-sections below this group of ethnic Chinese's experiences during such a period. They will be presented in the form of personal memory (section 2.1.) and public recollections (section 2.2.). They demonstrate how Hong Kong's trajectory has been different from that of China. This has resulted in Hong Kong lacking a cultural/national centrality that is

reflected in the self-awareness and self-definition of Hong Kongers – an ideological issue that renders the period of 1982-2002 important to this research. The transitional state and stage, which these ethnic Chinese have been through over the change of sovereignty, have at least two levels of understandings. For the purposes of this research, I will elaborate in the third sub-section (section 2.3.) below on the kinds of transition Hong Kongers may have dealt with, and the reasons for my choice of the period of 1982-2002 for this research.

There will be many occasions in this thesis where I mention the intricate relationship between Hong Kong and China that forms an important part of the contexts. The *China* that I will talk about has several dimensions. It is a cultural / ethnic concept as well as a nation-state. I will distinguish these concepts by using quotation marks to envelope the word 'China', whenever I refer to it in cultural and/or ethnic senses, while leaving the word as it is when I talk about the People's Republic of China and/or the nation of China. I will refer to the Republic of China as Taiwan.

2.1. Being a Hong Kong Chinese: My Story

I was born in Hong Kong to ethnic Chinese parents who are the second generation of immigrants to Hong Kong. My family had been living with my maternal grandparents since I was a toddler and I was particularly close to my grandfather, who was in the military fighting against Japan's invasion of China in the World War II. My grandfather used to tell me many interesting family stories in his hometown before the world war. After the war, he moved the family to Hong Kong in the 1940s when people were still free to move across the border between China and Hong Kong. The border was completely closed when the Chinese Communists established the People's Republic of China in 1949.

After a relatively quiet childhood in the 1970s, I started to make sense of myself and my hometown, Hong Kong. This process continued throughout the 1980s during a series of contextual changes which, in retrospect, were linked to an all-embracing topic – the imminent expiry of the ninety-nine-year lease of Hong Kong in 1997. It was officially announced in 1982 that Hong Kong would soon cease to be a British Crown colony since it was established in the 1840s after the Qing Dynasty of China had lost the Opium War to the UK. Moreover, not only the leased part, but also the ceded part of the whole territory would be returned by the UK to the Chinese government from 1 July 1997 onwards.[8] This incident was commonly regarded as 'the 1997 Handover' or simply 'the Handover'.

From a Chinese nationalist viewpoint, this could be a piece of good news because China would move one step forward in resuming its integrity as a nation-state, a wish that has preoccupied all the previous kings and rulers throughout the written history of China. Conversely, the official reminder of the sovereignty transfer and the ensuing years leading up to the post-Handover period witnessed anxieties in Hong Kong society about Hong Kong's uncertain future. There were worries about the disparities and adjustments between Hong Kong and China, since they had developed along separate trajectories for decades. Hong Kong's anxieties were also related to the possible loss of civil freedoms, reduction of the degree of democracy and the political stability that Hong Kongers had been enjoying. Some local Chinese-language mass media in Hong Kong even gave this impending historic event a nickname – 'the 1997 Ultimate Limit', suggesting the common nervousness in the society about the forthcoming sovereignty change.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong continued to thrive economically and succeeded in becoming one of Asia's Four Little Dragons unparalleled by any place within the geographical boundary of China.

The other three Little Dragons were Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. Hong Kong was an established metropolis and benefited from transnational and transcultural exposures.

My upbringing under the British colonial governance in Hong Kong and my education in a Catholic school run by Italian missionaries led me to see China and Hong Kong as 'they' and 'us' respectively.[9] In my mind, 'China' was only a vague concept, which I came across from my grandfather's reminiscences of his past. Moreover, the cultural concept of 'China' that I was indoctrinated with was different from the state apparatus running China today. I had never physically been to Mainland China and I did not know anyone there. Neither did I speak Mandarin (the official language of the People's Republic of China), though I could communicate with Mandarin speakers in standard written Chinese. My mother tongue is Cantonese (one of the major Chinese dialects spoken in the south of China) while most subjects in my school were taught in English. I could not identify easily with the communist China that was across the geographical border, as everything about it was so remote from me. It had never occurred to me that I would soon become part of it. Needless to say, I was scared of the idea of having Chinese nationality, as such identification had implied backwardness, inferiority and poverty for decades. The brutality of the Chinese government and the gory stories about civilians escaping from China during the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) were still fresh in our minds. My friends and I were proud of our lives in the comparatively 'advanced', liberal and better-off Hong Kong. We preferred to be identified as 'Hong Kongers', not 'Chinese'.

The Handover soon became a looming reality in our lives. In the summer of 1989, the outbreak of the Tiananmen Massacre in Beijing shocked the whole world, further intensifying the worries about the sovereignty transfer already infused in Hong Kong society. It sent the signal to Hong Kong that it would have an even harder time reuniting with China politically. My grandfather did

not have a chance to criticize the cruel acts of the Chinese government like other overseas Chinese would do in response to the inhumane killing of students and unarmed civilians in Beijing by their own government. Neither did he have to feel perplexed about the approaching Handover, for he passed away peacefully in Hong Kong in 1987 at the age of 83, after being in voluntary exile for some 40 years from his birthplace in the south of Mainland China.

My memories of the 1990s are full of farewells, as most of my friends and relatives emigrated with their families away from Hong Kong before 1997 arrived. The local airport was one of my most frequented places at that time. I went there to see people off. Nobody asked why they left because we all knew the reason.

2.2. Being Hong Kong Chinese: Their Stories

My grandfather's exilic story was only one of many thousands. Shortly after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953) in which China lent heavy military support to North Korea, there was a large influx of Mainland Chinese refugees to Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s for political and/or economic reasons. Hong Kong, being a geographical outpost of China while a British Crown colony, was a haven for them to stay away from the economic, social and political turmoil on the Mainland. At the same time, they could stay physically close to their ancestral land. These refugees soon amounted to a significant proportion of Hong Kong's local population, which was made up of natives and immigrants from previous waves of immigration. One may thus argue that most members of the Hong Kong population nowadays are not offspring of Hong Kong natives but are themselves immigrants or descendents of immigrants to Hong Kong. This port city had

transformed from a sparsely populated fishing village having only around 7,500 inhabitants in 1841 to a metropolis today with a population of about 7 million people.[10]

For those second and third generations of Chinese immigrants and refugees settling in Hong Kong, their feelings for their supposed mother country were more complicated because their tie to China was cut, yet they could not truly identify themselves with the British. The British passport, which was granted to them, stipulated that they were 'British National (Overseas)' and literally confirmed their status as colonial subjects. They were stuck in between being Chinese and British. During the whole course of negotiations between the British and the Chinese governments over Hong Kong's socio-political future after 1997, which culminated in the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984), however, Hong Kongers were not invited to join these discussions. It was soon determined that ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong would not be given British citizenship but automatically become Chinese citizens after the Handover. Ethnic minorities like Indians who had been living in Hong Kong for decades and might become stateless were given the right of abode in the UK on the eve of the sovereignty change.[11]

On 1 July 1997, which I recall as a rainy day, the people of Hong Kong bid 'foster mother' UK farewell. From then on, they had to find ways to recognize their 'Chinese' identity within the unprecedented 'one country, two systems' political framework. Fostering this new nationality was not a straightforward task, however, and preserving Hong Kong's freedom was not as easy as it seemed. The social confusions, economic turbulence, existential anxieties, and tensions of one kind or another, which commenced in the 1980s, still persist up to this day.

The effect of the Handover gradually became less obvious in the early 2000s when other sets of societal forces came into play, most notably the inefficiency of the new local government and the

unpopularity of Hong Kong's first Chief Executive (that is, the head of the government) TUNG Chee-hwa.[12] The year 2002 was the last year of Tung's first term of office. Subsequently, social discontent crystallized in different forms, such as the major street protest held on 1 July 2003 in which the protestors requested Tung to step down.[13] The event was triggered by the forceful push of Tung's government to introduce a security bill, which was interpreted by many local law professionals as a governmental instrument to curb Hong Kong citizens' democratic freedom when they were in the midst of struggling for more voting freedom in choosing their own government head. In 2005, Tung resigned for health reasons in the middle of his second term.

2.3. Transition

From the above personal memory and public recollections, we learn about the importance of the period since the Handover news was made known to the public: Such a period witnessed the recent historical development of Hong Kong and the lives of those affected individuals and groups. It demonstrated that the profound impact of the Handover on Hong Kong residents' lives went far beyond the year of 1997. Moreover, it signified an inescapable transition that all walks of life in Hong Kong had to undergo. The importance of the Handover transition thus justifies my research and reconsideration of Hong Kong films made during this period to reflect on the complex issues of people's lives and thinking under specific social, cultural and political circumstances. This is thus far an underdeveloped area in the existing Hong Kong film scholarship. I will talk more about it in a moment (in section 3.1. below).

As for the 'transition', there are at least two levels of understanding the transition that Hong Kongers experienced / are still experiencing. While one of them relates to the official sovereignty handover, the other concerns with the ideological and the socio-cultural dimensions

of Hong Kongers' lives, and their orientation during the Handover-related transition. This in turn also affects which years to be regarded as constituting the Handover-related transitional period. In this section, I will highlight the perspectives that we can take into account when considering this socio-cultural-political changeover. I will then conclude by explaining why I will cover the period of 1982-2002 in this research on Hong Kong cinema.

2.3.1. Official Year of Sovereignty Transition – 1997

In the government's opinion, the Handover transition counts presumably the year of 1997 *only*, directly relating the Transition to the overnight change of polity governing Hong Kong. The new polity is empowered by Hong Kong Basic Law (commonly known as the 'Basic Law'), which is the constitution document with effect from 1 July 1997 underlying the governance of Hong Kong after its reunification with China.[14]

Among those one hundred and sixty articles and three annexes to the Basic Law, the principle of 'one country, two systems' is clearly conveyed and upheld. For example, Article 2 states that:

> The National People's Congress authorizes the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to exercise a high degree of autonomy and enjoy executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication, in accordance with the provisions of this Law.

Article 8, which is concerned with the law system as it is enforced in Hong Kong, further states that:

> The laws previously in force in Hong Kong, that is, the common law, rules of equity, ordinances, subordinate legislation and customary law shall be maintained, except for any that contravene this Law, and subject to any amendment by the legislature of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

The practice of the British legal system is thus indirectly preserved and embedded in the everyday lives of Hong Kong residents even after the British colonizers have left the place.

As far as the civic lives are concerned directly, Article 5 stipulates that:

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

The provisions in the Basic Law are geared towards the smooth changeover of Hong Kong society between historical eras. There are nonetheless no further elaborations in the Basic Law on the legacy of colonialism in Hong Kongers' lives. Nor are there considerations of the nature of those fifty years of 'unchange'. They are not officially identified as a transition period. There are also no explanations as to why there are only fifty years of unchanged lives and established systems enforced under the 'one country, two systems' principle, which is itself problematic, as when China and Hong Kong have different interpretations when it is practized. A good example is the problem of the right of abode of Mainland Chinese whose parents are Hong Kong citizens. As such, the official record does not offer any clear interpretations for the kind of transition that Hong Kong society has to undergo, and how long such transition may actually take to complete. Instead of underscoring the gradual alterations that may happen in various respects in the society, the official record thus highlights an abrupt change of Hong Kong from British to Chinese governance after the midnight of 30 June 1997.

This was evident in the public speeches of several government officials. In the first policy address delivered by the first Chief Executive of Hong Kong on 8 October 1997, Tung made a brief mention that for Hong Kong residents, 'there is a gradual process of getting to know Chinese history and culture, so as to achieve a sense of belonging'.[15] The legacy and impact of colonialism on Hong Kong, on the other hand, were written off by Tung in the same speech. Victor Fung, the then chairman of the Trade Development Council of Hong Kong, gave a public speech entitled 'Hong Kong: One Year after the Transition' on 11 June 1998, clearly suggesting 1997 as the transition year in the government's viewpoint.[16] Similarly, Anson Chan, who was the Chief Secretary of Tung's government, gave a public speech on 16 November 2000 and referred the Handover transition explicitly as the year of 1997.[17]

There is no doubt that official records such as the above could make things easy to grasp, especially when they are meant to serve political purposes. However, the Handover is also commonly regarded as having structural effects and far-reaching consequences on Hong Kong society and its counterparts. It follows that the manner in which Hong Kong has been transiting from the stage of British colonization to complete re-sinicization both practically and ideologically is more thought-provoking, and the issues involved are more complicated than what have been written down officially. Notwithstanding the definite historical demarcation in the year 1997, the Handover-related transitional period may consist of different years and phases, depending on the state/stage of transition that the place Hong Kong has been undergoing and how we are to dissect the complex and ambiguous nature of such a transition. The ambiguities of the Handover transition and its corresponding years will be discussed in the next sub-section.

2.3.2. Years of Transition for Identity Quest?

First of all, the official records discussed above suggest that Hong Kong's de-colonization commenced after the official Handover in 1997. With the 'one country, two systems' principle empowering the whole de-colonized society for fifty years after the Handover and before the place is fully re-sinicized, it is politically valid to think of the transition of Hong Kong as consisting of the period between 1997 and 2046.

Meanwhile, the official announcement of the Handover in 1982 suggests that Hong Kong had in effect entered a post-colonial state/stage since that year. Different kinds of social, cultural, political preparations started to be underway fifteen years before the 1997 Handover. There was, for instance, the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 with regard to the socio-political future of Hong Kong. Negotiations and discussions of democratic freedom of Hong Kongers also began in that period. Whether bearing a positive outlook on the Handover and its related issues, Hong Kongers had started psychologically and emotionally to prepare for the then forthcoming sovereignty change long before it actually happened. Seen in this context, the Handover transition may include the whole period of 1982-2046, before Hong Kong completes its supposed re-assimilation into China.

However, one may also argue that it is still early to say when the re-sinicization will truly complete, given the fact that Hong Kong will always have the colonialism imprints in its history, current lifestyle and socio-political system. In other words, unless the legacy of British colonization are totally uprooted, which is made impossible by the very principle of 'one country, two systems' as we have just seen, it is very difficult to determine the exact moment when Hong Kong's transition from British colonial to Chinese rule really ends. The stipulation of the fifty

years of unchanged lifestyle at best offers a guideline to prepare for the advent of such a moment, but in no way can it confirm the date. The Handover transition, if thought from this perspective, may appear as an open-ended period with either 1982 or 1997 as the commencement year, as discussed above. On the contrary, any stipulated end of the period would appear arbitrary.

2.3.3. Research Period – 1982-2002

Seen in this context, I determine to limit my research period to 1982-2002. I see that there are two subdivisions in this period: One is pre-Handover period, the other the post-Handover period. As this research of Hong Kong cinema seeks to interpret the cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' quest for identity during a *transitional state/stage*, during the related years of the sovereignty transition, it is inspiring to consider the films made in the period after the Handover was known publicly but before the official Handover. That is the transitional state/stage in the pre-Handover period. Hence, the period of 1982-1997 is covered in this research.

Yet, confining this research to the years in and before 1997 would make it difficult to draw comparisons and contrasts of the manners in which Hong Kongers have constructed their sense of self before and after the advent of the new historical era. Hence, there is a research need to examine also the effects of the post-1997 happenings on Hong Kongers' lives. But how long such a post-Handover period should be considered in this research? An open-ended period would pose methodological difficulties on this study due to time and budget constraints. Meanwhile, there were noticeable changes in the social, cultural, political contexts in the first five years of the post-1997 era. Occurrences (such as the establishment of the new Hong Kong government headed for the first time in history by Hong Kong Chinese, the enactment of the Basic Law, and various kinds of psychological, emotional, socio-cultural and ideological adjustments that the

general public of Hong Kong had to make to welcome the de-colonization and prepare for the re-sinicization) contributed significantly to the changes. Given the availability of research materials and the contextual considerations, it is thus determined that this research of Hong Kong films would end in the year of 2002. The examination of Hong Kong films made during the first five years of the post-Handover era (corresponding to the first term of Tung's government) will then complement our understanding as to how Hong Kong Chinese have been altering their sense of being in their unsettled lives.

The choice of this research period of 1982-2002 is thus based on the consideration that the Handover transition reflects a state / stage of existence in the lives of all the parties concerned. It is not intended to give priority to these years over the period after 2002. Rather, in taking care of these twenty years from 1982 to 2002, this research gives us the opportunity to revisit and reconnect with the 1997 Handover-related analyses of film, while also incorporating new dimensions into the body of scholarly work on Hong Kong cinema. This is because different phases in history will come along with different opinions and emotions for the Handover transition. More recent historical phases (that is, the years after 2002) with other predominant socio-political factors, such as the stepping down of Tung, the rebound of Hong Kong economy, the entry of China into WTO, and so on, may encourage researchers to investigate Hong Kongers' lives in transition on some other levels, going beyond the immediate frame of reference of this research.

3. STUDY OF HONG KONG CINEMA 1982-2002

As we have seen, although the Handover was an important event in recent history of Hong Kong, it was more than a domestic matter. Cultural critic Ackbar Abbas reminds us that the Handover was also an international issue during that period:

> The Hong Kong handover directly affects Britain; it affects Taiwan by raising the question of Chinese reunification; it affects Japan, the United States, Europe and all those countries that have important trade relations with China; it affects Canada and Australia, who have large numbers of Hong Kong immigrants.[18]

Hence, a revisit of the happenings during that time in the last section is beneficial in illuminating our understanding of an immediate past that is still profoundly influencing many of us in the international world. Simultaneously, these social, cultural and political sentiments in Hong Kong have supplied important material to enrich the filmic culture among other cultural forms and institutions of this place. Hong Kong films made during this critical period constitute a large reservoir of individual memories and group recollections. They tell us the stories of individuals, families and groups, while exploring the relationships between Hong Kong and its residents, as well as counterparts.

In 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', Fredric Jameson argues that a radical difference between the first-world and third-world cultural productions lies in the relationship between the private and the public.[19] Whereas the reading of the private separates clearly from the public in the First World, the private always intermixes with the public in the Third World – a phenomenon which Jameson terms 'national allegories'. The manner in which

these apparently separate sectors in the society (in the First World's opinion) are mixed together, according to Jameson, is that:

> Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*.[20]

Jameson uses famous Chinese literary texts from the early twentieth century and other Third World texts to support his arguments. This concept of 'national allegory' may be applicable to reading Hong Kong's cultural texts for the recent historical / political development of Hong Kong, as this place has experienced colonization similar to that of its Third World counterparts. However, since Hong Kong is still not fully re-assimilated into China both ideologically and practically under the principle of 'one country, two systems' – a situation that I discussed in last section – the reading of Hong Kong's cultural texts as 'national allegories' may invite confusions, such as about which 'national' is being referred to. Queries may arise with regard to how far individual stories can possibly and effectively represent the public development of the society and culture, the extent of the allegorization, and the possible assumptions we need to consider before interpreting these recent Hong Kong films as 'national allegories'. The matter may become more complicated when we consider the metropolis Hong Kong as a collaborator of the First World (if not itself an integral part of the First World), rather than a part of the Third World.

Despite these possible confusions and queries, Jameson's concept of 'national allegory' by itself is useful as far as this research is concerned. Firstly, it helps us to understand how academics and researchers have understood the 1997 Handover's impact, implicitly or explicitly, on Hong Kong's film text production. It becomes evident that many existing studies of contemporary

Hong Kong cinema *do* have a tendency to read such an allegorization in Hong Kong film texts, which are mostly about stories of private individuals, to contemplate the (public) circumstances of Hong Kong society. I will discuss such a tendency in section 3.1. below. Secondly, by reconsidering and, thereby, reconnecting with the intellectual dialogues on the 1997 Handover-related analyses of Hong Kong films, this research undertakes to bring to the fore previously underdeveloped areas of concern in the existing Hong Kong film scholarship. I shall identify two of them here: One is concerned with Hong Kong Chinese's diasporic status, the other their degrees of 'Chineseness', in a global context. They will constitute two main threads that connect all the arguments I put forward in this thesis, whose methodology and theoretical underpinnings are introduced in section 3.2. below.

3.1. The Handover-related Analyses of Hong Kong Films

Major research work on Hong Kong cinema was published in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Different researchers have taken different research perspectives for their own work. No matter what their main arguments and premises are, interestingly, many researchers have taken into account the ubiquitous Handover effects on Hong Kong society in film. I shall present below some most quoted studies of contemporary Hong Kong films and their inspiration for this research.

Stephen TEO authors one of the seminal books, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (1997), about Hong Kong's cinematic tradition and practice.[21] Much like a history text on Hong Kong cinema, the book is divided into four parts consisting of sixteen chapters altogether. These four divisions give detailed information in four distinct respects of Hong Kong cinema's development. Part one, 'Northerners and Southerners', sets the tone of the book. The very first

sentence of the whole book reads that: 'The development of cinema in Hong Kong cannot be dissociated from the development of cinema in the Chinese Mainland'.[22] It illustrates the Chinese nationalistic angle that the author takes in conducting his research, besides his auteurist approach. The rest of this part is concerned with the existence of the early Hong Kong cinema and its lineage to the earlier Shanghai film industry, the birth and the decline of the old Cantonese cinema, and the trend of such major genres as father-and-son films. Part two, 'Martial Artists', focuses on the work and influences of martial arts directors King WU and ZHANG Che, and actors Bruce LEE and Jackie CHAN. Part three, 'Path Breakers', introduces two generations of Hong Kong New Wave directors and their films. Part four, 'Characters on the Edge', is devoted to exploring Hong Kong's identity crisis in film with reference to the fear and the reverence of Hong Kongers for their imminent new ruler, China. Teo looks into the 'wenyi' (or melodrama), horror, cop-and-gangster genres to find the connections between Hong Kong and Chinese cinemas.

In general, Teo's monograph supplies abundant information that was not readily accessible and discussed with such depth in the scholarship of Hong Kong films. However, as the author is too eager to discuss so much information all at a time, the book is informative at the expense of putting across central arguments. Sometimes, it is rather difficult to follow the flow of the book when there are too many digressions.

Teo concentrates much of his 1997-related readings in the last chapter, which is imbued with strong sense of Chinese nationalism and national allegorization, just like elsewhere in the book. He also resorts to post-colonialism in this chapter to help him explain several recent phenomena in Hong Kong cinema, namely Hong Kong director TSUI Hark's innovativeness in exploring film genres, actor Stephen CHIAU's 'mou lei-tau' (that is, nonsense) brand of local humour, and

those 1990s humorous pastiches of old Cantonese comedies made in the 1960s.[23] Since Teo puts

too much effort in trying to smooth out the complex relationship between Hong Kong cinema,

and its Chinese roots and nationalist sentiments, the author does not analyse the issues of 1997

Handover in film as incisively as he could have. Moreover, Teo generates confusions when he

talks about 'China' and what it means to Hong Kongers. Sometimes he may mean the Chinese

communism regime that Hong Kongers dislike,[24] whereas at other times he may mix it up with

the historic, national / cultural ideal of 'China' and hastily conclude the phenomenon of Hong

Kong loving and hating China as 'Hong Kong's China Syndrome'.[25] Teo's discussion thus

contains a hiatus regarding the ambiguous Chinese elements in Hong Kong films made during the

Handover-related transitional years. If properly addressed, such ambiguities could have brought

forth more insights and better understanding of Hong Kong cinema.

Teo's ambiguities in his mention of 'China' may be partially answered by the work of two

researchers, Yingchi CHU and Sheldon LU, whose studies also engage us in some other queries

concerned with the Handover-related sentiments in contemporary Hong Kong films.

Yingchi Chu publishes a monograph entitled *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and*

Self (2003).[26] Based on Andrew Higson's 'national cinema' approach, Chu conducts a

comprehensive, chronological research of Hong Kong cinema.[27] She argues that the changing,

triangular relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK over the years has allowed Hong

Kong cinema to change its nature accordingly from being a part of Chinese national cinema

during 1913-1956 (Chapter One), to Chinese diasporic cinema during 1956-1979 (Chapter Two),

to 'quasi-national' cinema since the late 1970s (Chapters Three to Seven).

Chu structures her book to reflect the qualities of different periods in Hong Kong cinema. Chapter One notes the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK, which happened as early as in the 1910s. China was a source of inspiration and subject matter in the early years of Hong Kong films which, according to the author, were nationalistic at that time. Chapter Two explores Hong Kong cinema as a Chinese diasporic cinema during the period of 1956-1979, when Hong Kong began to move away from China's influence while connecting with other overseas Chinese communities. The second part of Chu's monograph, consisting of Chapters Three to Seven, puts forward the author's main argument and elaborations of Hong Kong as a 'quasi-nation', when Hong Kong cannot be imagined as a pure 'national' community among itself, China and the UK. Hong Kong film texts from the period of 1979-1997 help construct the concept of Hong Kong as a 'quasi-nation', which includes the idea of Hong Kong as a nation besides being part of China.

Chu's argument for Hong Kong cinema as 'quasi-national' since the late 1970s is innovative. The in-depth considerations of the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK also make Chu's study stand out from other studies of contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Although there is no reference to Jameson's idea of 'national allegory', Chu looks for the representation of Hong Kong as a nation, for example, in *Dendai Liming / Hong Kong 1941* (Leong Po-chih, Hong Kong, 1984) against the background of the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984.[28] *'A' Ji Hua / Project A* (Jackie Chan, Hong Kong, 1983) and its sequel *'A' Ji Hua Xu Ji / Project A II* (Jackie Chan, Hong Kong, 1987), which are set at the turn of the twentieth century, are read by Chu as insinuating Hong Kongers' absence from the negotiations between the UK and China on Hong Kong's post-1997 future.[29] Chu reads *Ketu Qiuhen / Song of the Exile* (Ann HUI, Hong Kong, 1990) as Hong Kong's disappointment with both the UK and China in the whole matter of Handover.

However, in considering only the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK in influencing Hong Kong cinema's development, Chu confines her study to a narrow perspective. First of all, given Hong Kong's situations and the roles Hong Kong has been playing in an interdependent, transcultural, and transnational milieu, there are other countries / regions that have close economic, commercial and political relationship with Hong Kong. Chu bases her concept of Hong Kong's quasi-nationhood on the triangular relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK is then dubious and problematic. Moreover, what Chu claims about the imagined, distinctive community of Hong Kong under the shadow of China and the UK is simply too simplistic. Even the concept of 'nation' (or 'quasi-nation') comes across as dubious, as there is no consideration of the two percent of ethnic minorities and different Chinese-dialect groups living in Hong Kong.[30] Consequently, Chu's idea is perplexing when regarding the Hong Kong film industry as being operated like a 'national' film industry and serving as a platform for Hong Kong to construct its 'nationhood' in the most recent years.[31]

Also, Chu's eagerness in putting forward her argument for 'quasi-national cinema' in terms of film texts may have led her to commit fallacies in her film analysis. For example, in substantiating her claim of Hong Kong's independence from China and the UK, Chu reads Allen FONG's *Fu Zi Qing / Father and Son* (Hong Kong, 1981) as bearing no textual symbols to connect Hong Kong with China and the UK. In fact, the film makes it explicit that the father who is from Mainland China cannot make good money and get promotion in Hong Kong precisely because he does not speak English in the bilingual Hong Kong during the British colonial era. In order to allow his son to have better prospect, the father eventually sends his son to the USA for college education. Hence, Chu's innovative argument for Hong Kong's quasi-nationhood in recent Hong Kong films limits inevitably her own analysis.

With regard to the national allegorization, Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu's edited volume entitled *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (1997) is not entirely about Hong Kong films, but about different Chinese cinemas.[32] Yet its approach reflects how nationalism, if applied to Chinese cinemas in general, may create other kinds of uncertainties for studying the Handover effects in Hong Kong films.

Lu takes a Chinese nationalist stance in his anthology while seeking to problematize the 'national cinema' approach. He focuses on the transnationalization of Chinese cinemas and divides the book into three parts. The first part concentrates on the nation-building agenda of China. Essays include an account of the early development of Chinese national cinema (by Zhiwei XIAO), the close examination of a Mainland Chinese film, *Wutai Jiemei/ Two Stage Sisters* (XIE Jin, China, 1965) in its socio-political context on the eve of the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) (by Gina Marchetti), the nationhood and ethnicity in Mainland Chinese films (by Yingjin Zhang), and the transnationalism in the films of ZHANG Yimou (by Sheldon Lu).

The second part of the anthology has several insightful essays on films and key figures from Hong Kong and Taiwan cinemas. In analysing Hong Kong cinema, the book includes Anne T. Ciecko's essay on director John WOO and action cinema in a transnational world. Steve Fore discusses how Jackie Chan's stardom has travelled successfully to the USA, and suggests that Chan's screen persona embodies the identity crisis of Hong Kongers that has intensified due to the Handover. Jon Kowallis writes about the diaspora in contemporary Taiwan and Hong Kong films, while June YIP's essay explores how HOU Hsiao-hsien's films help construct a 'Taiwanese' national identity away from the Chinese Mainland. Wei Ming Dariotis and Eileen FUNG explore the displacement sentiments in Ang LEE's films.

Part three of the book emphasizes the gendered perspectives of Chinese cinemas, including different readings of *Ba Wang Bie Ji / Farewell My Concubine* (Chan Kaige, China / Hong Kong, 1993) by E. Ann Kaplan and Wendy Larson respectively. The constructions of gendered subjectivity in films from different eras in Chinese history are discussed in two essays – silent Chinese film *Xin Nüxing / The New Woman* (CAI Chusheng, China, 1934) by Kristine Harris, and *Ju Dou* (YANG Fengliang and Zhang Yimou, China / Japan, 1990) by Shuqin CUI. Yi ZHENG addresses the issues of feminizing China in the New Wave of Mainland Chinese cinema.

Taking a nationalist stance in studying Mainland Chinese cinemas in a highly globalized world is valid, when these films are understandably involved in the nation-building project of the People's Republic of China. However, when Lu and his contributors extend the nationalist investigations of films to those made in China's geopolitical 'periphery', such as Hong Kong, Lu jumps too quickly to conclude that Hong Kong cinema is also involved in the same 'nation-building' project.[33] Unconsciously yet inevitably, Lu homogenizes what it means to be 'Chinese' across different Chinese communities. On the other hand, the editor reminds us that:

> Hong Kong's cultural identity seen through its cinema is at once an identification with and distancing from the Mainland. In the 'grand narratives' of Mainland cinema, the identity of Hong Kong is omitted, elided, and erased. Hong Kong does not fit in the world-historical scheme of China.[34]

This generates confusions in that we are not told about the process of such unreciprocated identification, and the era of Hong Kong films to which Lu refers. As far as Hong Kong's Handover is concerned, Lu focuses primarily on how this historic event affects Hong Kong

cinema as part of the big family of Chinese cinemas. There are not much discussions on how the issues of the Handover affecting and finding its way in Hong Kong cinema *per se*.

The tendency of homogenizing the 'other' is also found in an anthology entitled *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics* (1994), co-edited by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther YAU as one of the early English-language volumes discussing Chinese cinemas.[35] The book foregrounds the fundamental difference between the Western and the Chinese perceptions of Chinese cinemas, and justifies its motives of grouping Mainland Chinese, Taiwan and Hong Kong cinemas together.

The book contains three (out of a total of nine) essays on Hong Kong films made since the 1980s. Leo Ou-fan LEE's article focuses on the style of several films, namely, *Project A* (Jackie Chan, Hong Kong, 1983), *Daoma Dan / Peking Opera Blues* (Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 1986) and *Yan Zhi Kou/ Rouge* (Stanley KWAN, Hong Kong, 1987). LI Cheuk-to writes about several Hong Kong New Wave films made in the 1980s that, according to the author, are preoccupied with the Chinese patriarchal tradition and the fear of the then imminent Chinese rule. In discussing similar films, Esther Yau's essay notes the changing cultural identity in Hong Kong films. Yet the author realizes that the continuous construction of such ambivalent identity in film is supported by Hong Kong's emotional bond with China, which Hong Kongers still felt awkward to admit it in facing a post-colonial future.

While the editors and the contributors have made a big progress in engaging in intellectual discourses about Chinese cinemas in general, 'China' as the 'other' entity remains intimidating from the Western perspective. As far as the three readings of Hong Kong films offered by Lee, Li, and Yau respectively are concerned, they all discover certain allegories in film. Whereas Lee

reads the metaphor of the uncertain future in the 'dislocated history' in the costume/nostalgic Hong Kong films, Li and Yau are concerned with the allegorization of the imminent but uncertain future of Hong Kong beyond the Handover. They read such allegory in the interactions between filmic representatives of Mainland and Hong Kong Chinese.

Poshek Fu and David Desser publish an anthology entitled *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (2000), aiming primarily to offer more insights into Hong Kong cinema from historical and critical perspectives.[36] The editors argue that the 'national cinema approach' may not be able to apply aptly to reflect the cultural and geopolitical situations of Hong Kong, and therefore suggest using a postmodern approach to look into Hong Kong cinema.[37]

Similar to other studies of Hong Kong cinema, Fu and Desser's edited volume prominently cover articles that explore the Handover issues in Hong Kong films, though 1997-related themes are not the only area of concern. Made explicitly in the book's subtitle, the volume has three main parts. Part I, taking a historical approach to studying Hong Kong cinema, is keen on presenting different genres of Hong Kong cinema. While David Desser traces the success of kung-fu films in the USA before 1973 (Chapter One), LAW Kar goes back even further in history to examine the connection between early Hong Kong cinema and the USA (Chapter Two). Poshek Fu examines the youth films made in the turbulent 1960s to understand how the colonial Hong Kong experienced modernity (Chapter Three). Stephen Teo investigates the interactions and tensions between Cantonese and Mandarin films in the 1970s, as manifested via the martial arts genre.

Part II of this volume explores the work of four outstanding Hong Kong filmmakers. David Bordwell thoroughly studies the visual style in King Hu's martial arts films. Tony Williams explores how John Woo's strong sense of dislocation as a Chinese living in Hong Kong has

influenced his films' narratives and aesthetics. The author however does not go too far from the Western paradigm and develops the idea of 'crisis' in Woo's films between 1986 and 1992 in a postmodern manner. The author believes that it has much to do with the *fin de siècle* atmosphere suffusing the whole Hong Kong society before 1997. Jenny LAU looks into the career of Cantonese comedy director Michael HUI and his box-office hits. Patricia Brett Erens investigates the themes and style in the work of Hong Kong director Ann Hui, and highlights the readings of 'the China Factor' in her films made preceding the Handover. Such overview shows Hui as a Chinese diasporic filmmaker who mourns for the pain of homelessness because of her own 'impure' 'Chineseness' in being a half-Chinese, half-Japanese descendent. 'Survival' is the key word of her work.

As far as reading the allegory of the Handover in Hong Kong films is concerned, the last part of this edited volume offers some of the very insightful readings on identity. Besides Poshek Fu's another chapter which studies Hong Kong's double marginality in both Chinese nationalist and British colonial discourses, and its reflection in Hong Kong films made during 1937-1941, the other essays look at films made in contemporary eras. LEUNG Ping-kwan's chapter surveys the cultural identity in Hong Kong's urban cinema since 1949 and reads the allegory of the Handover in Hong Kong films made between 1984 and 1997, such as *Touben Nuhai / Boat People* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1982) and *Yao Shou Du Shi / The Wicked City* (MAK Tai-kit, Hong Kong, 1992). However, when identifying the filmic representations and artistic forms of Hong Kong's city image that makes Hong Kong both similar to and different from those of China, Leung does not explain thoroughly about why there are such similarities and differences, in addition to the ambiguous sentiments in the films.

Similarly, Natalia CHAN Siu Hung attempts to contextualize Hong Kong's nostalgia films and sees their existence as a response to the 1997-related anxieties. The author argues that nostalgia films offer ways for Hong Kongers to escape the worries of the Handover, and alternatives to Hong Kong's history. Yet there is no consideration of the way in which Hong Kongers' sense of being could have developed under the shadow of the Handover – that is, were all Hong Kongers worried or were there mixed feelings for this historic event? Have Hong Kong Chinese ever had moments during which they felt excited about the reunification with their motherland? The answers to these questions could have influenced the validity of Chan's concept of the social function of Hong Kong nostalgia cinema.

Interestingly, Sheldon Lu's essay takes a positive perspective from the Chinese nationalist stance, revealing that there are indeed excitements over the Handover, but mainly in Mainland Chinese's eyes. Lu reads allegorically in several Hong Kong films to examine Hong Kong Chinese's fluid association with 'China'. However, the focus of Lu's reading is ultimately 'China' but not Hong Kong Chinese. His attempt to probe the identity crisis of Hong Kong Chinese is fundamentally sinocentric.

Through the commodities and commodification in several border-crossing Hong Kong films, Gina Marchetti identifies the ambivalence of Hong Kong identity vis-à-vis the American influence and economic globalization. In Marchetti's opinion, the commercial commodities, the shifting identities, and the keen concern with time in these films serve to allegorize the Handover, while the identity search of Hong Kongers is revealed without being confined by conventional geopolitical boundaries.

Fu and Desser's volume gives new insights into reading the Handover allegories in Hong Kong films made in the 1980s and the 1990s. By taking a postmodern approach to compile essays employing different approaches, Fu and Desser avoid bias while engaging readers in different intellectual discourses. Yet their book also elicits queries, such as, why Hong Kong Chinese behave so differently from Mainland Chinese's perspective and yet they are all ethnic Chinese? If it is not because of colonialism and de-colonization, will Hong Kong residents think and behave the same as Mainland Chinese and overseas Chinese? Without considering the national boundary, how can we tell the significance of ones' geopolitical distance from their motherland? How this distance might also exert influence on ones' interaction with those they live with in their host countries? This insightful volume could have benefited if it also tackles these queries.

Similar to Fu and Desser, Esther C.M. Yau casts doubt on the 'nationalism' approach to studying Hong Kong films. In her anthology *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (2001), Yau challenges the limitation of national boundaries, focusing instead on the impact of transnationalism on Hong Kong and its cinema.[38] The editor notes that contemporary Hong Kong cinema may incorporate Chinese elements, but they are not seriously explored in film. By receiving influences from Hollywood and some other cinematic cultures (most notably that of Japan), contemporary Hong Kong films in a transnational world appear both provincial and Hollywood-like. Their local and global appeals are reflected in their 'culturally androgynous' features in a highly flexible and syncretic manner.[39] The films are produced and consumed at fast pace, and then quickly sink into oblivion – as Yau notes, this is a paradoxical result of the limited amount of time due to the advent of the 1997 Handover, and the desire of keeping up with the fast progress of the global capitalism.[40]

The contributors of Yau's book transcend national borders in one way or the other in citing their opinions on different Hong Kong films. Part I of the book is about Hong Kong New Wave cinema. Law Kar's essay focuses on how Hong Kong New Wave came into being in the specific socio-political context in Hong Kong in the 1960s and the 1970s. Hector Rodriguez deals with a similar topic but argues that the emergence of Hong Kong New Wave is the result of critical discussions.

Part II has four essays on Hong Kong action films. While David Bordwell draws a parallel between scenes in prominent Hong Kong action films and Hollywood actions, Jinsoo An, Steven Fore and Stephen Teo read transculturally the films by John Woo, Jackie Chan, and Tsui Hark respectively. Bhaskar Sarkar's essay mobilizes Fredric Jameson's idea of 'cognitive map' to talk about the representation of Hong Kong as a cognitive space in film. The author finds the recent Hong Kong martial arts films allegorical, though they are incomplete allegories of the contexts. Elaine Yee-lin HO reviews Ann Hui's career and prominent work, which embody the interactions of Western and Chinese cultures, and witness the urbanization and the prosperity of Hong Kong over the years. The author pays particular attention to the underprivileged female characters in Hui's films, as they help demonstrate Hui's possible feminist turn in her recent films while allegorizing the Handover.

Part III emphasizes the disappearing cultural space of Hong Kong. In writing about the nostalgic film *Rouge*, Rey CHOW argues that nostalgia may not be a longing for the past but a register of the movements of temporality. Such sentiment is induced probably by the uncertainty of Hong Kong's socio-political future at the time when the film was made. Linda Chiu-han LAI reads the 1997 allegories in both nostalgic films and Stephen Chiau's nonsense comedies, arguing that these two film genres practize 'enigmatization' that privileges Hong Kong films' local audience

in such a way that the viewers are able to read against the grain in these films to understand deeper levels of formally constructed meanings. Gina Marchetti has an essay in this anthology. By investigating the films of New York-based, ethnic Chinese director, Evans Chan, she opines that there are difficulties yet needs to develop transcultural approach to study films that are transnational and transcultural. Kwai-cheung LO looks at how the Hong Kong film industry in the 1980s and the 1990s exemplify the transnationalization of Hong Kong's localism amidst all the prevailing, economic, socio-political and cultural risks and opportunities. Marc Siegel's essay reads WONG Kar-wai's *Chun Guang Zha Xie / Happy Together* (Hong Kong, 1997) from the sexual ghetto perspective to re-consider the role and the significance of the queer intimacy in public arenas in transnationalizing this film.

Thus, the transnational approach in Yau's anthology not only lends the book the transcendence over national/cultural boundaries, but also allows it to bypass the time limit set by the 1997 Handover. The Handover is undoubtedly a major factor determining the progress of Hong Kong cinema, but it should not be limiting our scope in learning from its development. However, in studying Hong Kong films' transnational and transcultural tendency, one may be tempted to ask the extent to which these films are transnational / transcultural. Are they ultimately dominated by a few mega cinematic practices, such as Hollywood? If it is so, what kind of impacts, positive and/or negative, will such Americanized transnationalism give to Hong Kong cinema, which can be both a globalized cinema and a Chinese cinematic practice?

In his monograph *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (1997), Ackbar Abbas examines Hong Kong's ever-changing self-invention in its specific, disappearing cultural space through studying the cultural forms of cinema, architecture, photography and writing, when the society has quickly turned into its post-coloniality even before the actual advent of 1997.[41]

Abbas takes the stance that Hong Kong's subjectivity needs to take into account the negotiations of colonialism, nationalism (though a doubtful one in Hong Kong's case), and capitalism in the global sense. He establishes his argument for 'déjà disparu' based on this unyielding, cultural environment of Hong Kong when no one can grasp it firmly before it has gone forever. There are three levels of 'disappearance' to which Abbas refers. The first one is a result of misrecognition. The second one is the replacement / substitution / misrepresentations in different Hong Kong cultural forms that Abbas investigates. The third one is using 'disappearance' as a tool to deal with 'disappearance'. For Abbas, the time frame for considering Hong Kong's cultural progress is set by 1997. Any speculation about Hong Kong's future beyond the Handover would only generate more anxiety and uneasiness.

As far as Hong Kong cinema is concerned, Abbas opines that the year 1982 has generated a new type of Hong Kong cinema – one that is at the same time popular and auteurist in response to the specific historical, socio-political situations related to the Handover. Abbas also argues that 'Hong Kong' is the subject matter of these new Hong Kong films. More specifically, it is the representation of the disappearing, cultural space of Hong Kong that becomes the very interest of these films, which attend to the mixture of imperialism and globalism as evolved in the place 'Hong Kong'. This cinema as represented by filmmakers like Ann Hui, Stephen Kwan, Wong Kar-wai, Tsui Hark exhibits the anxieties and apprehension of Hong Kong society in one way or the other.

Abbas realizes that one of the features that can be found in the new Hong Kong cinema is the concern for space. He also identifies five other of its features. The first one involves the reading of elusiveness of history. The second one is about the affectivity, which is about some unstable and unpredictable affective intensities with no name. The third one is the innovative use of film

genres. The fourth one is the use of multi-languages in film. The fifth one is the indirect expression of the politics of identity.

Abbas' politics of disappearance and argument for 'déjà disparu' help explain the filmic expression of Hong Kong's perplexity amidst the sovereignty transfer. His idea brings us new perspectives to look at the filmic manifestation of the Handover-related anxieties, which according to Abbas, go beyond allegory.[42] For example, instead of seeing Hong Kong cinema as a popular cinematic practice while consisting of art-house films, Abbas deliberately chooses several so-called art-house films such as Wong Kar-wai's first four films, Ann Hui's *Song of the Exile*, and Kwan's *Rouge* (1987) and *Ruan Lingyu / Centre Stage* (1992) as examples for his theory. He argues that they are part of the mainstream cinema and elaborates on how these directors have in fact made use of the conventional genres initially but departed from them to negotiate with Hong Kong's disappearing cultural space in film. They have responded to the Handover effects in so doing. However, as Abbas just studies a handful of Hong Kong films in supporting his theory, we are not sure as to how applicable it is to the rest of Hong Kong cinema made during the same period, and to films made after 1997 being impacted in every possible sense by the sovereignty handover.

Although not stating it explicitly, Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover read the allegory of the Handover anxieties in many of the Hong Kong films made between 1984 and 1999 when they take a political economy approach in their thoroughly researched book *City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema* (1999). The authors integrate the late capitalist cultural logic readily intelligible to the readers in the West, who may not be familiar with what contemporary Hong Kong cinema is about. Bearing mainly English-speaking readers in mind, the book has twelve chapters exploring aspects of contemporary Hong Kong films most interesting their target readers. It opens with an

introduction of the place Hong Kong (Chapter One), to be followed by a brief history of Hong Kong cinema (Chapter Two). Then, the book has four chapters on the most famous directors, actors and characters that are mostly related to Hong Kong action films. Chapter Three focuses on John Woo and his Hong Kong films. Chapter Four discusses the cop and rascal characterization, while Chapter Five introduces famous heroic characters in Hong Kong generic films. The careers and films of the famous martial artists, such as Jackie Chan and Donnie YEN, are the topic of interest of Chapter Six. More allegorical readings of Hong Kong films can be found in Chapters Seven to Twelve. In Chapter Seven, the authors discuss Hong Kong New Wave directors and their search for Hong Kong Chinese's identity in film when facing 1997. Storytelling in Hong Kong films as a way to reflect on recent historic events is investigated in Chapter Eight. Besides actions, the book also introduces other respects of contemporary Hong Kong cinema to audiences and readers in the West: Hong Kong comedies and comedians (Chapter Nine), and gender relations in romance comedies and food prominence in film (Chapter Ten). Chapter Eleven brings us the operation of the Hong Kong film industry under the shadow of 1997 Handover, while Chapter Twelve discusses films made in and after the year 1997 with cautious yet optimistic outlook.

City on Fire is one of the first books written to pay particular attention to two main perspectives of the operation of contemporary Hong Kong film industry: The money matter and the Handover anxieties. The authors name Hong Kong cinema 'crisis cinema'.[43] Although Stokes and Hoover downplay the relationships between Hong Kong and its dominant national counterparts, such as China and the UK, the authors read 1997 as a catalyst for the fast rhythm in many Hong Kong films.[44] The uncertain time allowance related to the Handover is read as triggering the favourite use of filmic icons, such as clocks, to express 1997-related worries of the society.[45] The Handover is also understood as the background of film series, such as *Huang Fei-hong / Once*

upon a Time in China (Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 1991),[46] and as the contextual factor for reading against the grain in the dialogues in *Bai Fa Mo Nü Zhuan / The Bride with White Hair* (Ronny YU, Hong Kong, 1993).[47]   In this sense, Stokes and Hoover attend to Hong Kong filmic texts (private stories) as national (or public) allegories of the happenings in Hong Kong.

Despite its good intention of introducing contemporary Hong Kong cinema to the West with detailed information of Hong Kong's socio-political context, the textual analysis in Stokes and Hoover's book comes across as over-descriptive, for example, in its plot and character examinations in Chapter Three on Woo's films, and in Chapter Four on Ringo LAM's films.   In addition, the book conveys a rather pessimistic tone in analysing Hong Kong films with reference to the uncertain future beyond the 1997 Handover.   As an academic research, such an approach may indirectly reflect bias on the part of the authors and undermine the study's authoritativeness.

Neo-formalist David Bordwell writes an authoritative and original book *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (2000) on Hong Kong cinema by employing mainly a formal analytical approach.   Contrasting to the concerns of Stokes and Hoover who treat the Handover effect in Hong Kong popular films as the underlying contextual factor, Bordwell brings to us another vantage point to read the public discourses (1997-related discussions) separate from private individual stories in Hong Kong films made since the early 1970s.

Instead of saturating his monograph with all kinds of Handover implications, Bordwell focuses on the formal aspects of Hong Kong films and the operation of the Hong Kong film industry, even though Bordwell shares some topics of concern with other researchers of Hong Kong cinema.

Bordwell's book has nine chapters. After justifying his formal approach in Chapter One, Bordwell gives a brief introduction of Hong Kong popular cinema's success and its artistic traits. This opening chapter also offers an overview of Hong Kong film history and highlights some popular genres, such as martial arts and comedies. Chapter Two discusses Hong Kong cinema's appeal for its local audiences. Besides, it also reviews Hong Kong's historical and socio-political context with reference to Hong Kong's colonization and the 1997 sovereignty handover. Chapter Three gives a chronological account of Hong Kong cinema's success and decline in various places in Asia, pinpointing Hong Kong cinema's connection with the Chinese diasporic communities in the region through such genres as martial arts and comedies. Kung-fu films' appeal for the West forms the focus of Chapter Four. After discussing the fast production and professionalism (Chapter Five); genre, star system, plot and continuity filmmaking style (Chapter Six); and storytelling strategies (Chapter Seven), Bordwell analyses the formal techniques of outstanding Hong Kong action films (Chapter Eight). The author attends to Hong Kong art cinema in Chapter Nine to wrap up his book.

Bordwell's formal approach to examining contemporary Hong Kong cinema, with frequent reference to Hollywood, justifies to a great extent the reasons why the author tends to circumvent Hong Kong's socio-political environment. He argues that there is no obvious political commentary in Hong Kong films, but only allegories interpreted by many critics.[48] Moreover, *Planet Hong Kong* also coincides with Jameson's argument about how the first-world cultural texts are read. That is, the arenas of private and public are completely separate. An advantage of such an approach is that the author conveys the results of his research – that is, the formal analysis of films and thorough investigations of the operation of the Hong Kong film industry – in an authoritative manner without sidetracking too much to the context. As Bordwell contends:

> Popular cinema is better considered as part of open-ended dialogue with its culture. People with different points contribute, and the result never freezes into a snap-shot of a zeitgeist or a national character.[49]

Hence, Bordwell sees things quite differently from those researchers who tend to read 'national allegory' in Hong Kong filmic texts, which are themselves appear quite ambiguous as far as such allegorization is concerned. For example, as opposed to what Sheldon Lu has said a few years earlier about the topic of 'China' preoccupying films made in different Chinese communities (see more discussions on *Transnational Chinese Cinemas* in this sub-section), Bordwell notes that directors from the era of Hong Kong New Wave have started to take Hong Kong, not the traditional China, as their main topic.[50]

The downside of holding back a more in-depth engagement with the socio-political circumstances in *Planet Hong Kong*'s formal analysis is overlooking the nuances that the contexts could have brought to the specific filmmaking styles and techniques in Hong Kong films. Bordwell's formal approach may also neglect that visual styles of these Hong Kong directors often support their strong sensibilities and sensations for their displacement.[51]

From the aforementioned, most quoted research of Hong Kong cinema, we are able to see that they all study Hong Kong films made during the 1980s and the 1990s by taking into account the context and the effects of the Handover. As such, they read the public and socio-political (though not necessarily 'national') dimensions in the private stories in film in terms of Jameson's 'national allegory', whether consciously or unconsciously.

Besides contributing significantly to the field of Hong Kong cinema studies, this body of insightful research also opens up research opportunities for undeveloped / underdeveloped areas

of concern. The first one is inspired by the suggested time frame of the 1997 Handover via the structuring of these publications. Several of them tend to arrange the material chronologically (for example, the studies by Teo, Chu, Stokes and Hoover, and Bordwell), and thus self-consciously delimit and limit their own research to the period up to 1997. They are hesitant about investigating Hong Kong films made in the de-colonized years, even when these investigations are published after the Handover. They thus inspire this current research of Hong Kongers' identity quest to cover films set and made before and after the Handover year. They are for investigating how contemporary Hong Kongers (or their allegorical representatives) continuously reinvent themselves during the transitional time span of the Handover, when their self-definition is unsettled by the force of circumstances.

Secondly, many of these studies give prominent coverage to martial arts / action genre (for example, the books authored/edited by Teo, Lu, Fu and Desser, Yau, Stokes and Hoover, and Bordwell). However, Yau reminds us that Hong Kong cinema is like any other cinematic practices on earth, consisting of other kinds of films, for example, romances, comedies, womanists, queers, horrors and thrillers, and melodramas of mundane lives, to name but a few.[52] It would be thought-provoking if more research can be conducted in these lesser-attended areas of Hong Kong cinema. Moreover, it may be more straightforward to spot the Handover effects in these other genres of film than to read against the grain for the 1997-related allegories in action films, which are far from depicting ordinary lives of Hong Kongers. Hence, this constitutes another inspiration for this research, which highlights the importance of everyday lives of ordinary people in film, to reflect on the bits and pieces of the Handover effects.

Thirdly, although researchers have been using diverse approaches to study Hong Kongers' cinematic representations, there are not much elaborations and explanations on the negotiations

between localism, Chinese diaspora concept, colonialism and post-colonialism, transnationalism, and so on, as played out intricately in people's lives. More specifically, intellectual discourses regarding, for instance, Hong Kong Chinese being not very 'Chinese', Hong Kong Chinese being part of the Chinese diaspora or not, Hong Kong Chinese's socio-cultural interactions with countries / cultures other than China and the UK, are not yet fully developed. There is thus often a mark of hesitation in film when Hong Kong Chinese characters attempt to situate and identify themselves. Such an uncertainty may merely magnify the grey area in Hong Kong Chinese's self-definition. Seen in this context, it would be stimulating to dissect this grey area and unearth the fundamental identity traits of Hong Kongers before we can interpret comprehensively the filmic representations of their identity quest during transition. This thus gives the main thrust to this research, which will take a step back from the existing Hong Kong film studies to consider why and how Hong Kongers struggle between being Chinese descendants and being a group of transnational/transcultural people not living physically in their motherland. Two main arguments – Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chinesesness' – will be established to link up all the separate parts of this research. The following sub-sections will introduce the main elements of this study of Hong Kong films made between 1982 and 2002.

3.2. Case Study

Due to the transnational nature of the film industry, it is difficult to define where exactly a film comes from. For example, should we take into account the funding sources, the shooting locations or the nationalities of the cast and crew? These criteria are either too restrictive or too broad to tell the place of origin of a film made nowadays. For the purposes of this study, I propose to consider both the filmmakers and the primary market of the film to determine whether a film is of Hong Kong origin. This should ease the tensions especially for those productions

jointly engaged in by Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese filmmakers. Hence, as long as a film involves Hong Kong-based filmmakers (directors and/or producers), totally or partially, and is made with a Hong Kong audience as one of its primary markets, I will consider it a Hong Kong film.

In order to consider the effects of the historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts on the cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' self-formation during the Handover transition, in this thesis I will closely examine eight films made between 1982 and 2002 by three Hong Kong-based filmmakers, namely Ann Hui, Wong Kar-wai and Fruit Chan. In chronological order of their release dates/year (see section 1, Filmography), they are *Touben Nuhai / Boat People* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1982), *Ketu Qiuhen / Song of the Exile* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1990), *A Fei Zhengzhuan / Days of Being Wild* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1990), *Chun Guang Zha Xie / Happy Together* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1997), *Xianggang Zhizao / Made in Hong Kong* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1997), *Qian Yan Wan Yu / Ordinary Heroes* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1999), *Liulian Piaopiao / Durian Durian* (Fruit Chan, China / France / Hong Kong, 2000), and *Xianggang You Ge Helihuo / Hollywood Hong Kong* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / France / Japan / UK, 2002).

This combination of films fulfils the criteria for testing out my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chinesesness', and for this research to contribute to the existing Hong Kong film scholarship at large, particularly in areas that I outline at the end of Section 3.1. above. The first criterion is that this bundle of films are made some time in the past several decades and include those that re-enact certain aspects of Hong Kongers' lives and feelings before and after 1997. As a group of films, they can therefore bypass the time frame of the Handover day to record the post-Handover life in Hong Kong. The second criterion

is that their narratives are concerned directly with the everyday lives of ordinary people (or their prototypes) in the society, rather than the dramatization of the outrageous behaviours of martial arts masters and / or action heroes often found in Hong Kong generic films. The third criterion is that their main characters embody the baffling characteristics of typical Hong Kong Chinese in terms of their self-perception as a group of Chinese people not living in Mainland China, and their transnational / transcultural worldview and connections due to their geopolitical situations.

All eight of the chosen films meet these criteria. *Boat People* tells the story of a group of Chinese-Vietnamese (before they fled the country) and their Japanese friend under the totalitarian communist rule in Vietnam in the late 1970s. It is widely regarded by critics and authorities (Hong Kong and China) as one of the first Hong Kong films to explore the societal anxieties about the Handover by apocalyptically allegorizing what might happen to Hong Kongers after 1997. *Song of the Exile* is Hui's semi-autobiography, telling the reconciliatory story between an estranged mother and daughter. It reveals how Hui (represented by the female protagonist) copes with several instances of identity crisis in the first part of her life. They mostly occurred in connection with the places where she went for sojourn. As the most expensive film ever made in Hong Kong up to its production because of its star-laden cast, *Days of Being Wild* is a nostalgic recounting of a group of young adults in 1960 and their unrequited love. Likewise, the main thread of *Happy Together* is the rotting love between a pair of gay lovers, backed by their ambivalent connection with Hong Kong when they are sojourning in Argentina. The film challenges the Hong Kong film industry's taboo subject – homosexuality – while attempting a fresh look at Hong Kong from the other side of the world when 1997 has finally arrived. *Made in Hong Kong* amazes the critics and audiences alike not only with its pessimistic outlook in facing the Handover with a narrative concerning several socially alienated teenagers from dysfunctional families, but also with its mode of independent production on a shoestring budget, a crew of only

five people and a cast of non-professional actors. *Ordinary Heroes* reminds us of the social activism in Hong Kong between the 1970s and the 1990s through the experiences of several fictitious, social activists. It serves as a cinematic record of Hong Kongers' collective memory and the director's personal feelings for Hong Kong. *Durian Durian* is a docudrama. It highlights the viewpoints and feelings of two Mainlanders – an illegal prostitute and an illegitimate child immigrant – who sojourn in Hong Kong. By contrast, the director acts as if he is only an observer and does not give any comments or narration on what is happening to the two protagonists. *Hollywood Hong Kong*, as the second part of Chan's prostitute series, shows initially the social isolation and later the sexual victimization of several male residents in the neighbourhood of Tai Hom Village, which was the oldest shantytown in Hong Kong, before the government pulled it down in 2001 for city redevelopment. Registering Chan's experiment with black comedy, the film continues the director's negative view in *Durian Durian* that economic globalization has taken its toll in both Hong Kong and China.

From the perspective of the film industry, these films are important in the sense that they are award winners and pioneers among other Hong Kong films in various ways (see Appendix 1.). As these films suggest, via the plot line, theme, motif, visual style, mood and tone, and/or characters and characterization, Hong Kongers' identity reinvention under the influence of the Handover, they are well-positioned to inspire other films made during the same period to reflect and reflect on the Handover effects on the society.

Owing to the above reasons and for the purposes of this research, I have chosen these eight films as representatives of other Hong Kong films made during the same period. I will argue that these films help demonstrate the unpredictability of identification when people keep readjusting themselves in regard to the circumstances.

There are three possible ways of approaching identity during its construction – alterability, indeterminacy and interminableness. While *alterability* refers to the change of people's perspectives in their thinking process, as in the emblematic journeying period in films (Chapter 2), *indeterminacy* indicates the uncertain direction in which people transform further their selfhood (Chapter 3). *Interminableness* signifies the perpetual delay in self-reinvention (Chapter 4). It is anticipated that an understanding of these features of identity during transition will help us see how the next stage of selfhood, once being disturbed, could possibly be reached.

The directors of these films are like average Hong Kongers. All of them were part of the diasporic population originally from China. They moved to Hong Kong at a young age (of or before ten years old). Like many child immigrants from China who went to Hong Kong in the 1950s and the 1960s and have now become the pillars of Hong Kong society, these three filmmakers, Hui, Wong and Chan, were raised in Hong Kong and have adopted the local socio-cultural specifics, such as lifestyle and way of thinking, since their early childhood. They are aware of their Mainland Chinese origin, yet they are more concerned with their present home in Hong Kong while having an outlook on the world beyond Hong Kong's geographical boundary. This thinking has suffused their oeuvres. For this reason, I believe that they can be regarded as very good delegates of their generation of Hong Kongers who, as I mentioned earlier in section 2.2., are aware of their intricate relationship with Hong Kong, China, and places beyond. I shall return to these filmmakers' individual biographies when I discuss their filmmaking considerations in section 4.1.2., Chapter 1.

3.3. Methodology and Theoretical Underpinnings

I have just elaborated on my rationale for choosing the eight films for critical analysis in this research. Informed by the prevailing social, cultural and political circumstances, I will carry out close textual readings in such respects as themes / subject matters, narrative structures, characters and characterization, and visual styles, in the hope of shedding new light on the complex issues regarding Hong Kongers' identity quest.

To minimize the negative consequences of reductionism or over-generalization while allowing this research to be manageable, these films are taken as re-enactment and snapshots of Hong Kong Chinese's lives and values. What they are to reveal in specific situations can then be used to exemplify, re-consider, and explain certain distinctive tendencies in Hong Kong society during the Handover transition.

Seven theorists and critics and their concepts lend theoretical support to this thesis, which *investigates the effects of Hong Kong lacking a cultural/national centrality on Hong Kongers' identity quest during transition, and amidst contextual changes as represented in films*. French post-structuralist Jacques Derrida's ideas on 'centre', 'sign', and 'différance' help me explain why Hong Kong(ers) do not have a fixed, imagined and idealized 'homeland' and thus do not always feel being bound to 'China'.[53] This has influenced how the people have developed their identity, which tends to be alterable, most conspicuously during the Handover transition when the contexts of Hong Kong have been changing rapidly. Indian post-colonialist Homi Bhabha's concept of 'cultural hybridity' of 'in-between spaces' offers ground for this study to explore Hong Kongers' unlimited opportunities of developing their individualities.[54] This happens during the time when Hong Kongers' experiences were/are different from other Chinese

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communities, while they are heading towards a future that would be unique to them under the influence of the 'one country, two systems' political framework after the Handover. The notion of Jamaican-born British cultural theorist Stuart Hall, that identity is a matter of '"becoming" as well as of "being"',[55] also informs this study on Hong Kongers' self-transformation during a transitional state/stage and period. Meanwhile, I also draw on a selection of perspectives by four film and cultural theorists, who have built their own concepts upon the pedestal of their diasporic experiences. They include Ien ANG's interpretation of 'Chineseness',[56] Rey Chow's 'tactics of intervention'[57] in between cultures, Abbas' 'politics of disappearance',[58] and Hamid Naficy's 'accented cinema'.[59] I will provide an overview of their ideas in the following sub-section and discuss how they would be helpful in this study.

3.3.1. Theorists and Theories

The way through which Hong Kong cinema has established its reputation would render this study of self representation in films less convincing, if I do not take into consideration Hong Kong's interrelationship with the grand Chinese narrative and other possible influences that Hong Kong exchanges with nations/cultures from afar. As a result of Hong Kong lacking a cultural/national centrality, on the one hand, Hong Kong films embody the legacy of traditional Chinese culture; yet on the other hand, there have already been many considerable transformations in the social-cultural values attributable to Hong Kong's international experiences. Many strict adherents of Chinese values thus regard Hong Kong films as representing a group of people who are at the periphery of the authentic (and by inference, more superior), sinocentric, Chinese imagined community.[60] For them, Hong Kong films are of low cultural/national value. I will discuss further on this view in section 3 in Chapter 1. Yet in other respects, such as acceptance of new

ideas, Hong Kong films are presumably more advanced. An identification with *Self* and the *Other* then unavoidably sets in when we juxtapose Hong Kong and 'China' in our discussions.

However, who really is *Self* and who is the *Other*? An important characteristic in Derrida's ideas that provokes our thinking and enriches the theoretical considerations in this study is the sceptical stance he posits in facing an assumed 'centre' that could be at odds with a field of supplementations of the 'sign' as the other part of such a structure.[61] One implication of this is that the difference between something that is supposed to be crucial (*Self*) and its counterpart (the *Other*) is ambiguous. Very often, the absolute demarcation between the two items is a result of the act of rigidity, which Derrida terms as 'violence'.[62] The ideas of 'centre' and 'sign', in my arguments in this thesis, can be studied together with Derrida's another idea of 'différance' (entailing the action of differing and deferring in meaning construction, as in a piece of text).[63] Although 'différance' originated from literary criticism, it becomes evident that this idea is applicable to other areas of concern when we explain or describe something via the characteristics of other items / ideas / entities and so on. For example, *Self* would become the 'dominant' if it is compared to the *Other*, while the *Other* would become self-ized if it positions itself in terms of another 'other' (which may or may not be the original *Self* in this case). Meaning constructions through 'différance' could debatably linger on and be postponed forever. These ideas will be helpful when I establish my case for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness,[64] and transformed 'Chineseness' in Chapter 1, where I will demonstrate that both concepts do not fasten to one, fixed cultural/national centrality.

Acknowledging the presence and the importance of nations in a transnational world, Bhabha turns our attention towards the boundaries in between nation-states. These are the spheres where anything like identities, cultures, values, politics and so forth are negotiable, and where

transnational occurrences begin. Bhabha terms such 'in-between space' as the 'Third Space'. A thorough understanding of what is going on in the 'in-between space' would help us appreciate the *truly* transnational cultures / values / era / state that happen there. As a former British Crown colony situated on the periphery of China's geographical boundary, Hong Kong in every sense can be pertinently referred to as an exemplar of the 'Third Space' between nation-states. Hong Kongers are poised to explore their hybrid identification and unlimited possibilities of their subjectivities in facing the dominant cultures. Yet in terms of post-colonialism, Hong Kongers have a past much vaguer than their present precisely because they have a problematic history with regard to their real 'origin'. Their history did not go along the current social, cultural, and political trajectory of communist China, whose rule over Hong Kong is compared by Chow to imperialism and hinted by Abbas as colonialism changing form.[65] It is also worth considering how long this particular situation of Hong Kong would persist, given that the Handover has been influencing Hong Kong for over twenty years.

Hall brings to us his interpretation of identity construction by drawing on his Jamaican experience and cinematic representation of identity in new 'Caribbean cinema'. He puts it explicitly that 'cultural identity […] is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past'.[66] In between these two states of existence, Hall directs our attention to the process of self-transformation that is constantly going on. Rather than metamorphose out of a void, identity is continuously reinvented and the alteration has to be contextualized in terms of history. This view is also applicable to the case of Hong Kongers. Moreover, Hong Kong's specificities may in turn bring forth other variables, such as the people's hesitant self-understanding that emerged during the course of self-modification.

Hong Kong films, in my opinion, help capture these variables through the directors' eyes and cameras. They project images to tell the story of Hong Kong and its people from various angles. The ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall thus open up a discourse that inspires us to reconsider the case of Hong Kongers' identity quest (vis-à-vis Hong Kong's interactions with various interrelating nations / cultures during Hong Kong's sovereignty transition), and its corresponding filmic images. The experiences of Ang, Chow, Abbas, and Naficy further stimulate our thinking about Hong Kong's bearings between globalization and localism, particularly during the period covered in this study.[67]

Ang was born in Indonesia and later educated and settled in the West. As an ethnic Chinese, she nonetheless neither speaks nor writes Chinese. This gives her considerable trouble in accepting an unequivocal relationship with 'China' and its grand cultural narrative. What she concludes from her Chinese diasporic experience is that the 'Chineseness' of ethnic Chinese people nowadays should be flexibly interpreted in order to assert one's special value in this world.

Similarly, we can find in Chow's ideas such a doubtful attitude towards absolute Chinese ideals. Chow was born and grew up in Hong Kong and received her undergraduate degree from the University of Hong Kong in the British colonial era. She was later awarded her PhD by Stanford University and is now residing and teaching in the USA. Clearly influenced by post-structuralist and post-colonialist concepts, Chow cites her previous life in Hong Kong as an endeavour named 'tactics of intervention' – a non-violent technique for occupying one's place in between different (predominantly British and Chinese) cultures. Chow recognizes Hong Kongers' diasporic conditions but dismisses absolute compliance to one's ethnicity and ethnic ideals without caring for one's own merits.

Ang and Chow thus encourage us to look at Hong Kongers' existential situations through their ever-changing, Chinese diasporic consciousness. Such an observation will help me deliver later on in this thesis the alternative readings of film to those of previous film research that tends to stabilize the perception of Hong Kongers and their sense of being in specific dimensions.

Abbas, who lived in Hong Kong and taught at the University of Hong Kong for years, highlights his specific view on Hong Kong culture. He argues that things emerge and disappear so quickly in this society that one may only notice their occurrences after they are gone ('déjà disparu'),[68] and sometimes one may even fail to see what is there ('reverse hallucination').[69] Abbas terms such complex circumstances as 'the politics of disappearance'. Suggesting counteractions against such situations and inviting people to think and act outside the limitation of Hong Kong's post-coloniality, Abbas contends that one can make a pre-emptive move by first 'disappearing' and then 're-appearing' in a striking manner. According to Abbas, many Hong Kong filmmakers have already consciously made such a move in their films by continuously adding in new elements to give them a competitive edge in the global marketplace.[70] It is in this sense that Abbas offers some concrete examples from the Hong Kong film industry to help materialize Chow's claim of 'tactics of intervention', when we study the way in which one maintains one's significance in an ever-changing world.

Iranian-born American film scholar Naficy formulates the concept of 'accented cinema', which is literally a cinema speaking with an 'accent'. Naficy's idea is based mainly on the diasporic/exilic experiences of filmmakers who are of Iranian and Middle-eastern descent living in the West. Naficy's notion inspires us to consider studying many contemporary Hong Kong films from the angle of 'accented cinema'. Apparently, Hong Kong cinema and 'accented cinema' are completely different entities, as the former is made by and about Hong Kong people while the

latter is based mainly on the experiences of diasporic/exilic filmmakers from the Middle East. Yet, due to their desire for survival (Hong Kong cinema for commercial survival and 'accented cinema' for geopolitical survival), unexpected similarities can be found in their film styles in terms of the sense of dislocation, modes of production, visual styles, characters and characterization, themes and narrative structures.

Naficy finds a link in Hui's *Song of the Exile* (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2 in this thesis) when he writes about the journeying experiences of the protagonists. As an expert in Chinese films, Gina Marchetti also associates contemporary Chinese films (including those from Hong Kong) with 'accented cinema' in her anthology *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (2006).[71] However, neither of the two scholars goes too far to examine the possible 'accentedness' in Hong Kong cinema. Inspired by their initial discussions, this study will be the first to look closely into a corpus of Hong Kong films made since 1982 from the angle of films that 'speak' with an 'accent' (Chapter 1).

The theoretical ideas and experiences of these theorists / cultural critics thus inspire us to reconsider Hong Kongers' identity quest and its cinematic manifestations. Moreover, I trust that these notions can help my own analysis to strike a balance between Western film theories/cultural paradigms and an Asian frame of mind when I study Hong Kong films in the hope that my study can take advantage of the research opportunities opened up by the existing Hong Kong cinema scholarship.

4. OUTLOOK AND THESIS STRUCTURE

Returning to the research questions I laid out earlier, I expect this study to contribute to the scholarship of Hong Kong cinema in two major respects. This thesis is thus structured accordingly. Upon the review of the underlying principles, strengths and weaknesses of the key studies of Hong Kong cinema in this Introduction in relation to the Handover analysis, Part I of this thesis develops my arguments for looking at the fundamental identity traits of Hong Kong Chinese before their identity quest in film is analysed. This part thus constitutes the theoretical framework of this thesis for re-evaluating the undeveloped / underdeveloped areas of concern in Hong Kong film studies on another level, namely along the lines of Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness'. In short, it serves as an intellectual springboard for my further discussions of Hong Kong's identity quest during transition in Part II.

The main purpose of Part II is to test out my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness', and their influences on Hong Kong Chinese in the way they think, behave, and build their selfhood in a transitional state/stage, as represented in film. Three of such transitional, changeable features of identity – namely, alterability, indeterminacy, and interminableness – are identified. The film analysis in this part of the thesis will provide us with an opportunity to see how Hong Kong Chinese have inclined to orientate themselves when ever-changing circumstances have gone beyond their immediate control.

4.1. Part I: Contextualizing the Study of Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002

Chapter 1 (Part I) contextualizes this study of Hong Kong cinema. In the first part of my discussion, I will build my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness,

and transformed 'Chineseness', by elaborating on the ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, and the experiences of Ang, Chow and Abbas. I will demonstrate how their concepts interrelate in inspiring my study.

A reason for mixing and matching their concepts to support my arguments is that among their ideas, there is a common thread of scepticism with regard to established (or more preferred) conventions. In particular, the ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall will direct us to question the interrelationship between the so-called 'centre' and 'periphery'. However, these theorists do not mean to overthrow their predecessors' ideas completely and replace them with new ones. As Christopher Norris, in introducing Derrida's *Positions* (2004), says:

> More accurate to say that he [Derrida] maintains and (at times) eloquently defends those values while also calling attention to the blind spots of prejudice – the symptomatic moments of exclusionary violence – that have often emerged with the discourse of enlightened modernity.[72]

Derrida's attitude can be found in other theorists' approaches mentioned here. More specifically, these seven theorists are keen on advancing ideas to shed new light on the issues that might have been overlooked by their predecessors. To learn from their attitudes and to apply their perspectives in my research would assist me in thinking outside the box and perceiving Hong Kong films on new and multiple horizons.

While some of these theorists (Abbas and Naficy) from whom I borrow their concepts have discussed Hong Kong cinema in their own investigations, this study is the first to combine their efforts together to discuss films made by Hong Kong filmmakers over the two most recent decades. On the one hand, this study will show the versatility of these theorists' initiatives. On

the other hand, I will be able to avoid the shortcomings of employing only one of them, since I believe that the personal experiences of these theorists make them well-positioned to substantiate one another's ideas. For example, Naficy's 'accented cinema' paradigm offers an approach to highlighting the features (and thus survival techniques) of many Hong Kong films made in the late 1980s and the 1990s, thus offering a concrete example for Chow's 'tactics of intervention' for living in colonial Hong Kong. Moreover, I intend to employ their ideas to scrutinize new films that were made after their studies (Abbas' in 1997 and Naficy's in 2001). I hope to extend the application of their theories to the post-1997 era, which witnesses the influence of another, newer set of contextual factors on Hong Kong films. In doing so, I anticipate to generate fresh insights into their concepts while illuminating our understanding of Hong Kong films with new findings.

The second part of Chapter 1 will be based on my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' to revisit major academic work on Hong Kong cinema written in English, in order to highlight the unresolved matters that have often caused academic disputes regarding the nature of Hong Kongers' identity traits. In so doing, the arguments that I establish in the first part of this chapter will justify my own reconsiderations and close study of film later on in this thesis.

Based on Naficy's 'accented cinema' paradigm, part three of this chapter will follow closely my arguments in the previous two parts to examine how Hong Kong filmmakers have conveyed their messages through specific cinematic features in their films. I will mobilize different Hong Kong generic films made between 1982 and 2002 to contend that contemporary Hong Kong cinema can be regarded as an *almost* case of diasporic filmmaking, due to an urge to survive that it shares with 'accented cinema'.

4.2. Part II: Deciphering the Quest for Identity in Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (Part II) aims at decoding the identity search during transition, as articulated in Hong Kong films. I set out early on in section 2 to discuss that any identity and identification need to be contextualized. By the same token, contextualization of cinematic representations helps us make better sense of what the filmmakers, consciously and unconsciously, try to tell us about themselves and their fellow Hong Kongers when their unsettled identity was further disturbed during the Handover transition.

Coming from this Chinese community, I believe that such disturbance was triggered by the extrinsic, environmental changes and the resulting adjustment that people needed to make of themselves whether they welcomed these changes or not. However, how such self-adjustment could come about may not be a simple task for those involved. Studying Hong Kong cinema during the historical transition and seeing how film characters live their lives dramatically provide us with opportunities to re-appreciate and rediscover who we were in a particular time before we enter the next stage of life. This is not only applicable to the experiences of Hong Kongers, but can also be generalized to that of other communities having the need to undergo certain critical changes.

I attempt to analyse three kinds of changeable features that could be found in any transitional identity under construction. It is expected that they will help us to probe into the ways in which the sense of self can further develop.

In Chapter 2, I will talk about the first of these features – the alterability of identity, which is connected with Hong Kongers' emigration in the 1990s. I will draw on my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness in Chapter 1 to reinterpret such population mobility in film. Through the diegetic physical journeys and symbolic journeying embedded in the narrative structures of pre-Handover films *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild* and *Happy Together*, I will discuss how people adopt additional and different standpoints during the journeying period (which includes actual journeys and the thinking process). They may change their opinions on things and on themselves under different circumstances. As long as more viewpoints are adopted during such a period, the people's selfhood is likely to continue altering.

Chapter 3 will extend my arguments on the second possible attribute of self-perception – the indeterminacy during people's development of their sense of being from one state/stage to the next – when the governing contextual factors are not yet settled. My arguments for Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' in Chapter 1 will be further developed to help me examine their way of re-inventing themselves during the Handover transition, in particular when they were facing other groups of rootless Chinese in Hong Kong, such as Vietnamese boat people and illegal visitors from China. I will examine the relationship between the directors and their alter egos in these rootless, Chinese characters in pre-Handover film *Boat People* and post-Handover film *Durian Durian* respectively. I will thus argue that the state/stage of indeterminacy of identity transformation offers an opportunity for the people to find the best possible direction for further constructing their selfhood.

Finally, Chapter 4 will attend to the third possible characteristic of any individuality going through transformation – the interminable delay of selfhood. Drawing on my arguments on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' in Chapter 1, I will

discuss the ambiguity between *Self* and the *Other* in Hong Kong's case when it comes in contact with different nations/cultures. Through analysing the use of different diegetic communication media in three post-Handover films, *Ordinary Heroes*, *Made in Hong Kong* and *Hollywood Hong Kong*, I will argue that the directors effectively represent the blurred demarcation between what is supposed to be *Self* and the *Other*. The situations would result in an interminable delay of self-construction as articulated in films. Hence, it will be important for people to adjust themselves tactically and psychologically when they are stuck in such kinds of situations.

Besides the attempt to rediscover and redefine ourselves in a general sense through surveying the cultural representations of identity negotiations in Hong Kong films, we would be able to modify our cognizance of the past and to learn the unwritten history through these films. I believe that this is essential to unearth that part of our past via different sources. In addition, I am certain that only when we can drop our preconceptions and re-reckon flexibly some bygone issues, such as the Handover and its impacts, and with different perspectives will we be able to re-settle confidently in the future. In this regard, Hong Kong cinema made during this critical era can contribute immensely in helping us to learn from history.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This thesis thus seeks to enhance our understanding of Hong Kong cinema 1982-2002 on two fronts when Hong Kong lacked a cultural/national centrality. On the one hand, it offers different perspectives upon the theoretical foundations of post-structuralist (Derrida's ideas) and post-colonialist notions (Bhabha's and Hall's ideas) to scrutinize films made by Hong Kong Chinese during a time when their self-recognition was in crisis due to contextual changes. Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' have determined to a great

extent how they have responded to the circumstances. References to the diasporic experiences of several theorists (Ang, Chow, Abbas and Naficy) give us the opportunity to appreciate the case of Hong Kong films in unconventional ways, for example, by comparing them to that of 'accented' films when they share the urgency to survive and to reach their target audiences. On the other hand, considering the issues at stake with these new arguments in mind would allow us to produce innovative readings of the films covered in this thesis. This lets us think over the phenomena that could possibly occur between different stages of self-transformation during the Handover transition, and allows us to meditate more deeply the impact of a departed age while we are expecting a promising future to come.

NOTES

[1] My translation; from the original Chinese-language promotional material of the film *Qu Nian Yan Hua Te Bie Duo/ The Longest Summer* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1998).

[2] Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort, 'Introduction', in *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity*, ed. by Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. vii-xxxii (pp. ix-x).

[3] David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[4] Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover, *City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema* (London: Verso, 1999).

[5] Poshek Fu and David Desser, 'Introduction', in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1-11 (p. 5).

[6] *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*
<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=38918&dict=CALD>.

[7] *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edn (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1993), p. 575.

[8] Hong Kong Island of Hong Kong was ceded to the UK in 1842 after the First Opium War (1839-1842). A perpetual lease of Kowloon Peninsula of Hong Kong was later given to the UK in 1860 after the Second Opium War (1856-1858). The New Territories of Hong Kong were leased to the UK under a ninety-nine-year lease that would expire at midnight on 30 June 1997.

[9] The British colonial government in Hong Kong, which was headed by a Hong Kong governor appointed by the British government, ran a series of amicable civic programmes after the pro-Communist street protests in 1967. The purpose was to ameliorate the socio-political tensions in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the infamous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) just started on the Mainland. China was too busy with its internal affairs that it did not have the opportunity to have much influence on Hong Kong.

[10] Y.C. Richard WONG, 'Hong Kong Growing as Part of China: A Historical Perspective', a speech delivered at Asia Society Conference: 'Hong Kong One Year after Transition: Business Opportunities and Policy Challenges', 15 June 1998 <http://www.asiasociety.org/speeches/wong.html> [accessed 17 August 2007].

[11] Ackbar Abbas, 'Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics', in *Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. by Esther M.K. Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China), 2004), pp. 273-296 (pp. 284-285).

[12] Paris Lord, 'Tung Popularity Plunge', *The Standard*, 28 August 2002

[13] <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?pp_cat=&art_id=20176&sid=&con_type=1&d_str=20020828&sear_year=2002> [accessed 11 June 2007].

[13] Jimmy CHEUNG and Klaudia LEE, '500,000 Take to the Street', *South China Morning Post*, 2 July 2003; Liam Fitzpatrick, 'The Long March', *TIME* Magazine <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030714/story.html> [posted 7 July 2003] [accessed 11 June 2007].

[14] http://www.info.gov.hk/basic_law/welcome/main.htm

[15] http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/pa97/english/patext.htm

[16] http://www.tdctrade.com/tdcnews/9806/98061201.htm

[17] http://www.info.gov.hk/basic_law/upload/974437080/SPEECH.htm

[18] Abbas, 'Other Histories, Other Politics', p. 287.

[19] Fredric Jameson, 'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', *Social Text*, No. 15 (Autumn 1986), 65-88 (p. 69).

[20] Ibid., p. 69; italics in original.

[21] Stephen Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: BFI, 1997).

[22] Ibid., p. 3.

[23] Ibid., pp. 246-249.

[24] Ibid., p. 112.

[25] Ibid., p. 207.

[26] Yingchi Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

[27] Andrew Higson, 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen*, 30, No. 4 (1989), 36-46; Andrew Higson, 'The Heritage Film and British Cinema', in *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. by Andrew Higson (London: Cassell, 1996), pp. 232-248; Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[28] Chu, *Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 65-66.

[29] Ibid., p. 81.

[30] Ibid., pp. 46, 50.

[31] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[32] *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. by Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).

[33] Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, 'Historical Introduction: Chinese Cinemas (1896-1996) and Transnational Film Studies', in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. by Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 1-31 (p. 12).

[34] Ibid., p. 15.

[35] *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, ed. by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther Yau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[36] Fu and Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, pp. 2, 4.

[37] Ibid., p. 5.

[38] *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. by Esther C.M. Yau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

[39] Esther C.M. Yau, 'Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World', in *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. by Esther C.M. Yau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 1-28 (p. 8).

[40] Ibid., pp. 2, 4.

[41] Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1997).

[42] Ibid., p. 62.

[43] Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, p. 304.

[44] Ibid., p. 35.

[45] Ibid., p. 36.

[46] Ibid., pp. 93-94.

[47] Ibid., pp. 110-114.

[48] Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, pp. 40-41.

[49] Ibid., p. 37.

[50] Ibid., p. 69.

[51] Jimmy NGAI and Wong Kar-wai, 'A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai: Cutting between Time and Two Cities', in Jean-Marc Lalanne, David Martinez, Ackbar Abbas and Jimmy Ngai, *Wong Kar-wai* (Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1997), pp. 85 and 98-100; Tony Rayns, 'Poet of Time', *Sight and Sound* 5, No. 9 (September 1995), 12-16; Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: British Film Institute, 2005), p.14.

[52] Yau, 'Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World', p. 25.

[53] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 278-293; Christopher Norris, 'Introduction', in Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. and annotated by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. ix-xliii (p. xix).

I refer to Derrida's notions as part of the post-structuralism tradition instead of naming it specifically as 'deconstruction' in order to bypass the complex and controversial connotations that the concept of 'deconstruction' entails and thus goes beyond the scope of my research.

[54] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-7 (p. 4); Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: Locations of Culture', in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-18 (p. 6).

[55] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation', in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), pp. 704-714 (p. 706).

[56] Ien Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[57] Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studie*s (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 1-26 (p. 25).

[58] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, pp. 1-15.

[59] Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[60] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

[61] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 289.

[62] Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas', in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 79-153 (p. 91).

[63] Jacques Derrida, 'Différance', in Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass with additional notes (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), pp. 1-27; Jacques Derrida, 'Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva', in Jacques Derrida, *Positions,* trans. and annotated by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 15-33 (pp. 22-26).

[64] Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, p. 23; William Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return', *Diaspora*, 1.1 (Spring 1991), 83-99 (p. 87).

[65] Rey Chow, 'Between Colonizers: Hong Kong's Postcolonial Self-writing in the 1990s', *Diaspora*, 2.2 (Fall 1992), 151-170 (p. 153); Abbas, 'Other Histories, Other Politics', p. 284.

[66] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation', p. 706.

[67] Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen, 'Introduction', in *Theorising National Cinema,* ed. by Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen (London: BFI, 2006), pp. 1-14.

[68] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance,* p. 25.

[69] Ibid., p. 6.

[70] Ibid., p. 8.

[71] Gina Marchetti, *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), pp. 23 and 26.

[72] Norris in Derrida, *Positions*, p. xix.

Part I

Contextualizing the Study of Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002

CHAPTER 1:

HONG KONG CINEMA 1982-2002 IN PERSPECTIVE

> If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of a field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a definite discourse, but because the nature of the field […] excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, […] instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions.[1]

1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

There was a surge of interest in scholarly research of Hong Kong cinema in the 1990s and the early 2000s, corresponding roughly to the time when Hong Kong was shedding its political status as a British Crown colony to turn into a special administrative region under China's governance. Yet among film scholars in the West, there was the concern about insufficient understanding of Chinese culture and its manifestations in Hong Kong films. For example, Stokes and Hoover are aware of their status of 'Hong Kong outsiders' in writing their book *City on Fire* (1999).[2] Peter Brunette admits his 'lamentable lack of knowledge regarding Chinese aesthetics' in the preface to his book *Wong Kar-wai* (2005).[3] As a consequence of the cultural barrier, many researchers, who attempt to explain identity construction in Hong Kong films, refrain from studying intricate areas of concern and the oscillatory feelings of Hong Kongers during the territory's sovereignty transition.

For the purposes of contextualizing this study on Hong Kong films made between 1982 and 2002, the first part of this chapter will discuss the effects of Hong Kong's lack of a

cultural/national centrality on Hong Kongers' unsettled sense of being. I will employ the theoretical ideas of Jacques Derrida ('centre', 'sign', and 'différance'), Homi Bhabha ('cultural hybridity'), and Stuart Hall (identity as a matter of 'becoming'), and the experiences of Ackbar Abbas, Ien Ang, and Rey Chow to look into two traits in Hong Kongers' identity: Diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness'.

The ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall are important to my study, in that prominent parts of their theories enable me to question the issues that are related to the dubious relationship between the 'centre' and the 'periphery'. On the one hand, Derrida's scepticism of the totalization of any structure, and the ambiguous relationship between the 'centre' and the 'sign', as well as his idea of 'différance' problematize the widely believed, hierarchical relationship between Hong Kong and 'China'. On the other hand, Bhabha argues for the 'in-between spaces' along the boundaries between nation-states in offering limitless possibilities for the self to be invented. His viewpoint is thus applicable to Hong Kong, which is geopolitically / nationally / culturally situated between China, and other nations/cultures. Finally, Hall reminds us that identity can only make sense through its continuous transformation with regard to the past and the future, thus offering us a perspective to look closely into the transformation of Hong Kongers' identity from one state/stage into another during the Handover transition. Their opinions will help me establish my own arguments that Hong Kongers have situational, diasporic consciousness while their 'Chineseness' has transformed over the years.

Focusing on these two areas of Hong Kongers' sense of self will allow me to revisit existing scholarship on contemporary Hong Kong films. In the second part of this chapter, I will give an overview of the main research that is concerned with Hong Kong cinema. Most of this work emphasizes films made after the late 1970s, due probably to the relatively limited supply of

subtitled film material available before the 1970s. Many are written in English and the researchers (for example, John Lent, Nick Browne and others, Sheldon Lu, Stephen Teo, and Ackbar Abbas) are enthusiastic about introducing Hong Kong cinema systematically to the West. Others (for example, Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover; David Bordwell; Poshek Fu and David Desser; Esther Yau; Yingchi Chu; Esther CHEUNG and CHU Yiu-wai; Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung LI and Stephan CHAN Ching Kiu; and Gina Marchetti) adopt a transnational outlook, explicitly or implicitly, to analyse Hong Kong films. Besides celebrating Hong Kong's rich cinematic tradition that has previously evaded Western scholars' attention, almost all of these aforementioned investigations discuss, to various extents, Hong Kong films' socio-political responsibility in response to the sovereignty transfer. They also capture and debate the contemporaneous anxieties of Hong Kongers in relation to the Handover. Several studies (for example, those conducted by Bordwell, Stokes and Hoover, and Chu) also offer insights into aspects of Hong Kong cinema's industrial practice that are less known in the West.

After this overview, I will draw attention to the unresolved matters that are related to my two identified areas of concern, namely Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness'. In doing so, I hope to find out whether my own study can offer explanation and elaboration for the nature of Hong Kongers' identity construction. In order to facilitate my own film analysis in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I will propose in the third part of this chapter to employ Hamid Naficy's 'accented cinema' model to study contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Although 'accented' and Hong Kong filmmakers have different kinds of concerns in their film projects, with the former attending to political matters while the latter pay special attention to financial issues, their need to survive and to reach their target audiences have interestingly led them to develop similar film styles, which Naficy features in his paradigm. As such, contemporary Hong Kong cinema offers

an *almost* case study to support the applicability of Naficy's 'accented cinema' model to an entirely different cinematic tradition.

This chapter therefore provides us with a platform to reconsider certain presuppositions and to seek support from various theoretical paradigms and perspectives, on which I build my analysis of Hong Kong cinema's identity quest during transition, as laid out in Part II of this thesis.

2. HONG KONGERS' IDENTITY TRAITS: SITUATIONAL, DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS, AND TRANSFORMED 'CHINESENESS'

I discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, via the stories of Hong Kong Chinese, how Hong Kong and China have moved along different trajectories historically, socially, culturally, economically, and politically. This gives us the background of Hong Kongers' ambiguous sense of self, which was heightened since 1982 when the news of the Handover was officially announced. I call it 'ambiguous' because *Hong Kong did not have a cultural/national centrality* as a result of the trajectories that I discussed. Due to colonization, Hong Kong received its cultural influences via its international experiences (instead of from a single, nationalist source) while localizing them to create its own specificities, whilst simultaneously influencing its international counterparts. This led Hong Kongers' sense of being to change unpredictably, especially when Hong Kong was preparing to go back to Chinese rule since 1982. Such ambiguities in their identity continue these days, as reflected subtly through such cultural form as film, instead of in official government records.

It is specifically because of Hong Kongers' lack of a cultural/national centrality that certain aspects of the theories of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, and the experiences of Chow, Ang and

Abbas can help us in explaining Hong Kongers' situations and the corresponding development in their identity. It is certain that each of these theorists has their own paradigm. However, as all of them cast doubt on preconceptions when putting forward their own ideas, I would argue that various aspects of their theories are helpful principally in enlightening us to look afresh into different dimensions of self-development of Hong Kongers during the period covered in this research. In particular, the arguments of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall are useful for my own research, in that they address, in one way or the other, the issues related to the 'centre' and the 'periphery' in their theories. Inspired by their opinions, I will explore in this section two traits of Hong Kong Chinese's identity, namely situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness'. Firstly, they will support my views when I revisit the existing scholarship on Hong Kong cinema from new angles later on in this chapter. Secondly, they will also enlighten my elaboration on Hong Kongers' identity quest, as it is represented in films, in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in this thesis.

As the discussions of these two identity characteristics spring from the relationship between Hong Kong and 'China', some of the areas of concern under their canopy may seem very similar, for example, the matters concerning with the interrelationship between the 'core' and the 'periphery'. For this reason, I would like to emphasize the orientation of these two discourses. According to William Safran, 'diaspora consciousness is an intellectualization of an existential condition'.[4] It is the intellectual quest of the displaced people to find themselves in relation to their homeland. In this respect, such awareness bears a strong orientation towards *geopolitical* and *nationalist* senses. On the other hand, 'Chineseness' deals more with the *cultural* constituents that make up the Chinese people in general. It may refer to any cultural traits like languages, behaviour, ways of thinking, religious beliefs, dietary habits, and so on that help people to identify themselves as Chinese descendents, though the matters of race and ethnicity

often play significant roles in influencing these cultural attributes. However, it serves as an example to demonstrate that a given designation may refer to different things for different people in different places and eras. 'Chineseness', in this respect, is treated as a case study whose results could be extrapolated to 'Britishness', 'Italianness', 'Japaneseness', and designations alike.

2.1. Hong Kongers' Situational, Diasporic Consciousness

In this sub-section, I will contend that Hong Kongers have developed a sense of situational, diasporic consciousness throughout the colonial and de-colonial years. After presenting various perceptions of Hong Kongers' diasporic status and consciousness, I will mobilize the ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, and the experiences of Chow and Abbas to help me develop my own arguments. Whereas Derrida's ideas inspire to a great extent my reconsideration of the validity of a fixed, hierarchical relationship between Hong Kong and 'China', Bhabha's concept of 'cultural hybridity' supplements and polishes my opinions further by bringing Hong Kong's international experiences into the picture. Hall's interpretation of identity and its cinematic representations direct our attention to the effect of Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness on the ongoing process of self-construction. Meanwhile, Chow's 'tactics of intervention' for living in Hong Kong and Abbas' observation of Hong Kong's specific culture will offer us important cases to support Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness.

2.1.1. Diasporic Status and Consciousness

Floating Life (Clara LAW, Australia, 1996), which was made around the time of the Handover period, expresses blatantly Hong Kongers' sense of loss in facing the sovereignty transfer. This film was partially funded by the Special Broadcasting Service in Australia as part of the

multicultural policy of the country. Although it is categorized as an Australian film, its preoccupation with matters related to the emigration of Hong Kongers, who feared the Handover, summarizes succinctly the similar disturbance that many Hong Kong-based productions depict during roughly the same time. The film crystallizes these people's anxieties through the dialogue between the Hong Kong émigré characters. For example, when Bing, the second daughter of the Chans, rebukes her family for actively enjoying their new immigrant life in Australia, she yells: 'You don't come here [Australia] to enjoy life. You are running away from turmoil. You are in diaspora!'[5] The Handover is dramatically described as an upheaval and the main cause of their emigration from Hong Kong to Australia. As Bing emphasizes, their move highlights the fact that they are a part of a diaspora.

According to *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, there are at least two meanings for the term 'diaspora'.[6] One of them specifically associates the term with the scattering of Jews 'living in different parts of the world outside Israel, or the various places outside Israel in which they live'. The other meaning is in a general sense, referring to 'the spreading of people from one original country to other countries'. In theorizing the concept of 'accented cinema' in which exilic and diasporic filmmakers would engage, Naficy defines 'diaspora' as follows:

> People in diaspora have an identity in their homeland *before* their departure, and their diasporic identity is constructed in resonance with this prior identity. However, […] diaspora is necessarily collective, in both its origination and its destination. As a result, the nurturing of a collective memory, often of an idealized homeland, is constitutive of the diasporic identity. […] People in diaspora, moreover, maintain a long-term sense of ethnic consciousness and distinctiveness.[7]

These definitions of 'diaspora', which indicate the place-bound features and the collective, historical factors constituting a group's identification and imagination, may be useful in

understanding the mentality of those ethnic Chinese communities that have relocated far away from their homeland China. This is because ethnicity and homeland in their cases are unambiguous concepts. Nonetheless, due to Hong Kong's lack of a cultural/national centrality, these defining criteria of diasporic groups, if applied to Hong Kong Chinese, may expose their limitations and the difficulty with which the ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong can be aptly signified. Certain tough questions may be raised, for example, do Hong Kongers who are somehow dislocated fit into the classification of diaspora as it is broadly understood? If they are regarded as diasporic people, should they be considered as diaspora from China or from Hong Kong, when they have the opportunity to, for instance, emigrate to other countries? Do Hong Kongers think of themselves as a displaced people or not?

If diasporic consciousness, according to Safran, is mainly an intellectual activity, Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness is meant to be intricate, given the dubious recognition and connection of Hong Kongers with the concept of 'China', and the difficulty in defining their disaporic status. On the one hand, many of the current inhabitants in Hong Kong were once émigrés who left China whether voluntarily or not to seek for their *new* yet maybe *temporary* life elsewhere. They were Chinese diaspora dislocated from the Mainland to a lost Chinese territory, Hong Kong, located nearby. For them, Hong Kong was part of China, at least on the emotional level where they could associate themselves with the idealized 'China' that they had lived up to.

On the other hand, the place Hong Kong situated on the southeastern edge of China's territory was not part of today's China in reality – in social, economic and political terms – before the Handover. The complications may not be eased straightforwardly by the Handover because the colonial experience has been imprinted on people's lives and will continue to remain there. This made it hard, in particular, for locally born Hong Kongers to establish a sense of displacement

and diasporic status. Even if they have developed such a sense of diasporic identity, it is likely to be convoluted due to their lack of a *real* connection with their supposed mother country, 'China'. Some of them may have learned to identify with 'China' through their parents/grandparents. However, this association was based on what they were told and not what they themselves actually went through.

Other people might simply ignore the *abstract* connection between themselves and their more remote, ancestral home in China, regarding instead Hong Kong as their hometown that had an expiry date and enjoying its advancement in every respect of life while conditions allowed them to do so. They would even develop a sense of elitism as compared to the backwardness of Mainland China before it participated in late capitalism as a socialist country. As a former British Crown colony, Hong Kong has not really been under Western oppression as in, for example, the case of Edward Said's Middle East in his *Orientalism*.[8] Hong Kong has been quite free, for instance, in the sense of its economic development. It has been famous for the colonial government's 'Non-interventionistic Policy' – a term that was widely used to refer to the government's hands-off practice during the territory's economy peak in the 1980s. With the benefit of hindsight, we may see that colonialism did more good than harm to Hong Kong's transnationalization progress throughout the course of history.

There were/are yet many people who would choose to turn to non-geopolitical objects to build their sense of association with Hong Kong (for example, through global consumerism as Marchetti proposes), and become the loyal followers of McDonald's, Coca Cola and the like.[9] When manifested in films, the diasporic self-understanding of Hong Kongers may then be reduced to the backdrop. *Floating Life*'s director, Law, makes use of international consumerism to embellish a humorous sequence in her other acclaimed film *Qiuyue / Autumn Moon* (Clara

Law, Hong Kong / Japan, 1992) which depicts the friendship between a fifteen-year-old Hong Kong Chinese girl and a Japanese male in his mid-twenties. They meet in Hong Kong while the male protagonist tours there and they learn from each other the meaning of life. When the young man asks the girl to bring him to a 'traditional' restaurant in Hong Kong so that he can taste some authentic Chinese food, the next shot, however, cuts to a McDonald's where they are eating French fries and hamburgers. The excited girl confirms to her disappointed Japanese friend that it is a 'traditional' restaurant from the USA, which has a history older than her grandmother's age. Obviously, 'China' as a concept/homeland is completely absent from the young girl's mind. As Law says: 'We Hongkong Chinese are more like an abandoned child, because we don't really have China and we don't really have Hongkong. […] The fact that we don't have a home weighs heavily on our minds'.[10] Marchetti also sees it this way:

> Filmmakers look at the way their Chinese characters fit into global picture, and the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong drift to the background as the Chinese diaspora, Asian American/Canada/Australia/Eurasia and more cosmopolitan, multicultural relationships move to the fore.[11]

This scene in *Autumn Moon* shows only one of the many ways in which filmmakers represent the convoluted situations surrounding the diasporic consciousness (and/or the lack of it) of Hong Kongers in films. There is a plethora of other cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' identity quest during the same period that are worth discussing. In order to investigate how filmmakers portray the inconclusive sense of self (and its construction) of Hong Kongers during the Handover transition, and to revisit what scholars and critics have interpreted from these filmic representations, I will now seek theoretical support from Derrida, Bhabha and Hall in the following sub-sections. Abbas' observation of Hong Kong's culture will also be useful for us to understand more deeply the issue on hand.

2.1.2. Decentring, Diasporic Consciousness: Derrida

As Hong Kong cinema is one of the Chinese-language cinemas, a reconsideration of the correlation between Hong Kong and the concept of 'China', as informed by Derrida's ideas of the 'centre', 'sign' and 'différance', constructively leads us to reassess the preconceived hierarchy between Hong Kong and 'China' often embodied in film and film studies. Through this reconsideration, I would argue that Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness is situational.

In the quotation selected from Derrida's 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' with which this chapter starts, Derrida argues against the totalization of a structure in terms of the correlation between the 'centre' and the 'sign' (or the part) of any given 'field' (or structure). According to Derrida, if the 'centre' or the 'origin' fails to be there and/or fails to function as the buttress for the entire 'field' to create meaning, the 'sign' (the part) of that 'field' could stand in to replace the 'centre' and perform its role in an infinite number of possible manners. The substitutions would delay the meaning construction. Derrida names this concept 'play'. In this paradigm, any previous fixed hierarchy between the supposed 'centre' and the 'sign' would become insignificant. Accordingly, the presumed totalization of that 'field' would be useless and impossible because the incessant supplementations and substitutions between the so-called 'centre' and the 'sign' would make these two kinds of entities indistinguishable and hence un-limit the scope of totalization. Derrida's idea can be visualized in the following diagram.

Diagram 1.1.:
Derrida's 'Centre' and 'Sign'
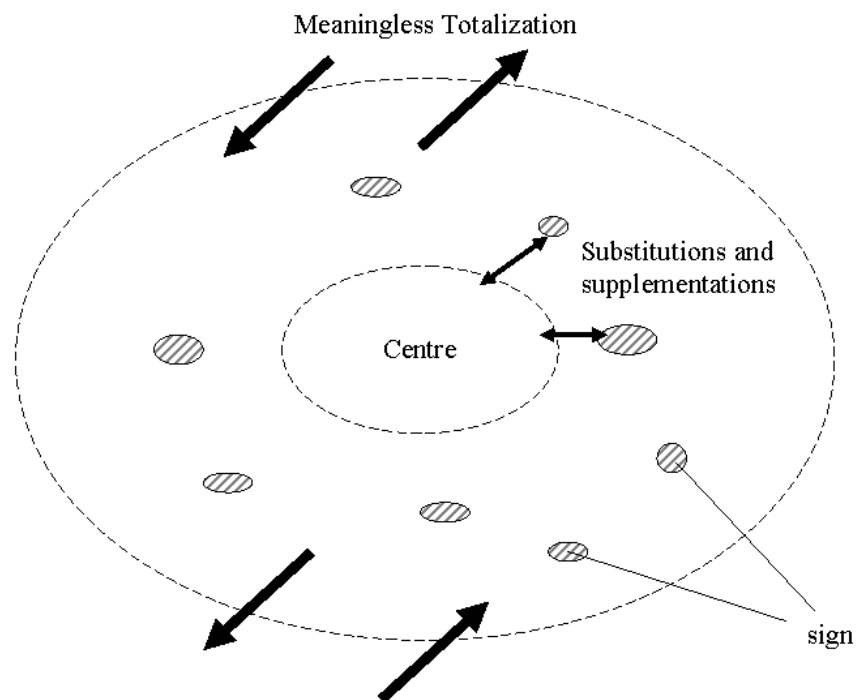
As the 'sign' is considered as a supplement to the supposed 'centre' and the substitution process is unremitting, there will always be more to add on, resulting in the overabundance of the signifier, which would further delay the signification process. Derrida concludes: 'The *overabundance* of the signifier, its *supplementary* character, is thus the result of a finitude',[12] which refers to the lack of the supposed 'centre'.

The delay of meaning construction can be further understood through Derrida's 'différance'. Derrida puts forward 'différance' as signifying the inevitable deferment of meaning formation when any sign, which represents something else already present, is delaying our cognizance of that something else.[13] In addition, by referring to the other thing that the sign signifies, there will automatically be a difference, and the effects of difference, occurring to the sign and that

particular 'other' that the sign is referring to.[14] 'Différance' then rules the close relationship between two actions – to defer and to differ:

> In a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to be a *being* – are always *deferred*. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces.[15]

Derrida's ideas can help us explain Hong Kong's complicated relationship with regard to 'China', if we think of the Chinese grand narrative as a geopolitical/nationalist/cultural structure with 'China' / Chinese nationalism / Chinese civilization and so on as the supposed 'centre', and Hong Kong and its local specificities being part of such a structure. The positioning that Hong Kong occupies is far from rigid in such a relationship. We will be able to discover and appreciate the unrestrained trajectories that Hong Kongers have developed to build their selfhood during the course of history. This is because even if there is the 'centre', for example, 'China' or the Chinese values handed down through generations, it may mean different things to different people. For Hong Kongers, *it is an 'origin' itself that is never complete and is always subject to further translations and interpretations*. Aggravated by the geographical, social, cultural, and political mis-/dis-locations of Hong Kong, it would be extremely hard for Hong Kongers to identify with a *single*, geopolitical/nationalist/cultural 'centre' during their self-construction process. The logic of too many frames of reference means that none at all applies here. The lack of a fixed, single, referential anchorage from the outset, when Hong Kong started to realize its unique qualities in the world, often ensured that self-formation of Hong Kongers was difficult to attain. This idea is shown in the following diagram.

Diagram 1.2.:
Derrida's 'Centre' and 'Sign': 'China'-Hong Kong Application

Meaningless Totalization: Hong Kong vs. 'China'

'China'

Substitutions and supplementations

Local specificities of Hong Kong
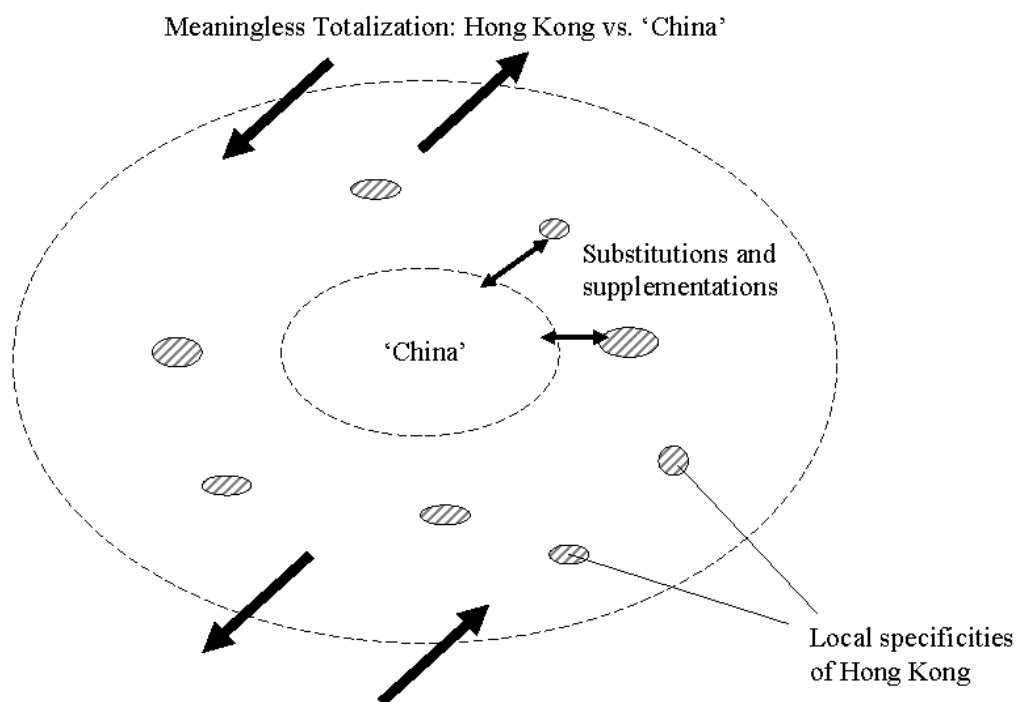
Hence, if we study cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' self-assertion from the perspective of their diasporic mentality without understanding the intertwining relationship between Hong Kong(ers) and 'China', we could easily draw a conclusion that is precariously grounded. Yet, we cannot deny the fact that they were ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong but outside China proper – the supposed ancestral land for all Chinese people. In fact, the Handover has stimulated Hong Kongers to confront their deep-seated attachment-detachment complexity with 'China'. This sensation was, nonetheless, more than just related to a geographical location, nor was it purely cultural. Naficy suggests the moment when people feel displaced: 'Most of us take for granted our place in the world and come face-to-face with it only when we are threatened with displacement'.[16] For the ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong, their displacement sentiment has been around all the time in that they have *always* known that the place where they were residing was a lost Chinese territory and had an impending expiry date. Transpiring in the daily

lives, they would need to obtain proper identification documents to pass through the border before entering China. This policy has not changed even after the official Handover. Their Mainland Chinese counterparts were/still are also required to hold certain documentation to cross the border under the previous and present political frameworks since the People's Republic of China was set up.

Following this line of thinking, the Handover transition was only a trigger to let Hong Kongers release *more* blatantly their attachment-detachment feelings for their supposed motherland. Therefore, instead of deciding whether Hong Kongers think of themselves as a Chinese diaspora and whether the filmic articulation of their mindset is of a diasporic type, it would be more suggestive for us to see Hong Kongers as both a Chinese diaspora and *not* Chinese diaspora simultaneously. For Hong Kong Chinese, their diasporic consciousness is *situational*; that is, which kind of sentiments would surface has to depend on the prevailing circumstances, such as the socio-political atmosphere, economic-related matters and mass media promulgation of individual incidents.

Two contrasting examples demonstrate the changeability of Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness. Their disapproval of the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 impelled many of them to re-forge the emotional link with their Mainland contemporaries, as exemplified by many apolitical Hong Kongers who took to the street to protest against the brutal deeds of the Chinese government. Such behaviour activated their strong feelings for 'China' as their ultimate homeland in cultural, ethnic and geographical senses. Yet when SARS broke out in the south of China in 2003, Mainland China became an alien land again for Hong Kongers who disdained the country for its backwardness and Mainlanders for their poor standards of hygiene.[17] The awareness of this situational, diasporic consciousness of Hong Kongers will help us demystify

why different Hong Kong films carry extremely different images of Hong Kongers regarding their correlation with China and places far afield.

Derrida's ideas of 'centre', 'sign' and 'différance' thus offer the theoretical considerations that assist us to question the biased, widely-believed, geopolitical/nationalist/cultural hierarchy between Hong Kong and 'China', and explain why Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness is situational. They will shed light on un-accepting preconceptions during our discussion on existing scholarship of Hong Kong cinema, and the film analysis in subsequent chapters.

While Derrida's arguments direct us to rethink the preconceived, hierarchical relationship between Hong Kong and 'China', which is Hong Kong's supposed cultural/nationalist origin, Bhabha's theory on 'cultural hybridity' of the 'in-between' spaces, which will be discussed in the next sub-section, turns us to see Hong Kong as an active participant of international exchanges. The opinions of Chow and Abbas on Hong Kong as a transnational and transcultural place will offer strong support for us to look into Hong Kong's situations from the angle of Bhabha's 'cultural hybridity'.

2.1.3. 'Cultural Hybridity': Bhabha, Chow and Abbas

Bhabha's concept of 'cultural hybridity' gives us another angle to think about Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness by allowing us to re-evaluate the interrelationship between Hong Kong and 'China' in comparison with the interactions between Hong Kong and other nations / cultures. According to Bhabha:

> What emerges as an effect of such 'incomplete signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the *in-between* spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. […] The anti-nationalist, ambivalent nation-space becomes the crossroad to a new transnational culture.[18]

Bhabha considers this kind of 'in-between' space as the 'Third Space', which 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom'.[19]

Bhabha elaborates further:

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.[20]

The 'Third Space' can thus be regarded positively as a zone that is forever invigorating. Bhabha's opinion frees us from nationalist constraints in studying Hong Kongers' sense of self as exemplified in films, further attesting to the futile totalization of meaning construction in Derrida's sense. Based on Bhabha's idea, instead of considering Hong Kong as related to a *single* nation-state, we may be able to see it as located in between nation-states where it negotiates its distinctiveness; *and* at the same time its relatedness with 'China', other nations and cultures. The following diagram illustrates my point.

Diagram 1.3.:
Bhabha's 'In-between Spaces' as Illustrated by Hong Kong amidst Nations and Cultures
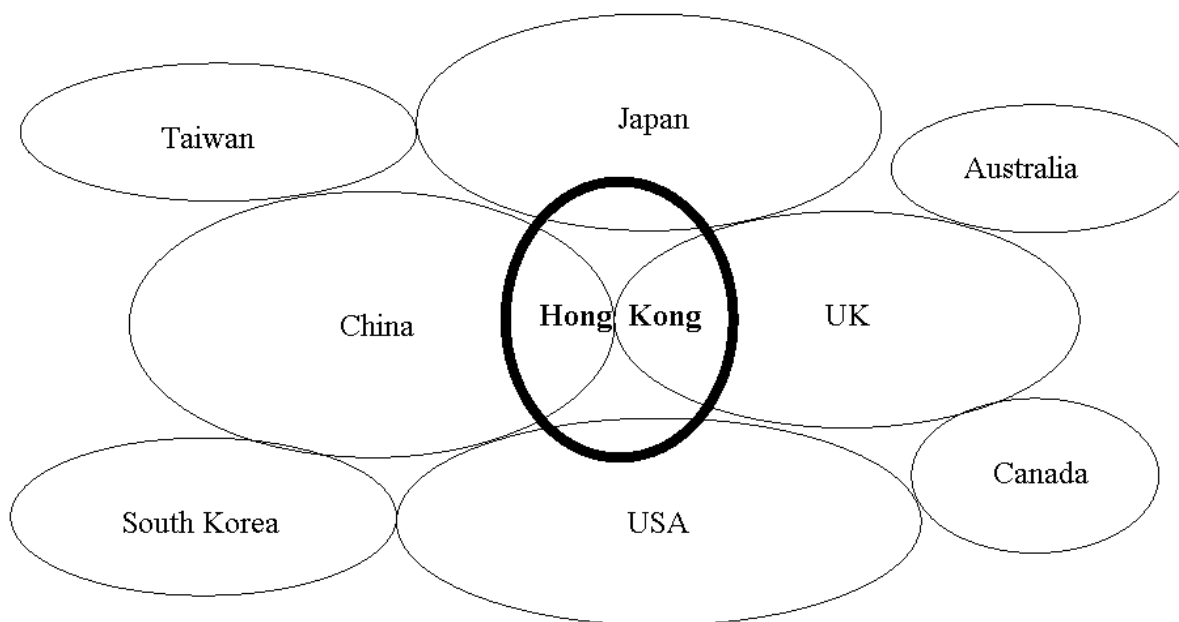
Given the historical development of Hong Kong and its situations in a geographically / nationally / culturally in-between zone, Hong Kongers could be deemed as being located in a 'Third Space'. This is where, because of Hong Kong and its people's liminalities, especially during the Handover transition, there are unlimited possibilities for Hong Kongers' subjectivities to be explored and evolved. For example, as Hong Kong is a port city, it has always been exposed to different kinds of cultures besides traditional Chinese values and the British colonial system. There are significant cultural and economic exchanges with the USA and Japan, not to mention other neighbouring regions like Taiwan and Southeast Asia.[21]

Bhabha's idea of 'cultural hybridity' thus reinforces my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, in that it provides us with another dimension from which to look at Hong Kong's circumstances. It is not from a nationalist angle but is based on Hong

Kong's international experiences. In advocating the re-inscription of the past while adding in new variables in the identification process that happens in the in-between spaces, Bhabha leads us to see how Hong Kong has gradually transformed from a genuine Chinese diasporic community to develop its sense of a situational, diasporic consciousness.[22]

Hong Kong-born Chinese-American cultural critic Chow renders her experience of living in Hong Kong as a kind of 'tactics of intervention' for living in the in-between space (in Bhabha's sense). In *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (1993), Chow suggests thinking of the border-crossing activities that diasporas are involved in, in terms of the *borders* that, according to Chow, are para-sites where the demarcation between national and transnational is blurred.[23] The critic argues that this is where people would be able to *intervene tactically* or to gain their footholds under the impacts of different dominant cultures. Chow regards her experience living in Hong Kong as:

> […] the tactics of dealing with and dealing in dominant [British colonial and Chinese] cultures that are so characteristic of living in Hong Kong. These are the tactics of those who do not have claims to territorial propriety or cultural centrality. Perhaps more than anyone else, those who live in Hong Kong realize the opportunistic role they need to play in order, not to 'preserve', but to negotiate their 'cultural identity'.[24]

As an expert at Hong Kong culture, Abbas more specifically enunciates Hong Kong's special situations in between nations and cultures. Writing in *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (1997), Abbas argues that a 'new Hong Kong subjectivity' would result from the mutations and permutations of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism working together to surpass Hong Kong's post-coloniality.[25] The critic believes that such a new subjectivity comes into being when the old cultural binarisms such as East and West, local and global, are no longer valid in Hong Kong's case. It would be able to overcome the awkwardness that Abbas terms as

'déjà disparu', that is, 'the feeling that what is new and unique about the situation is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been'.[26] These would include Hong Kong and its people as mis-recognized, replaced, substituted or misrepresented imageries in film,[27] to the extent that the audiences are overwhelmed and unable to see what is there, and hence experience a state of 'reverse hallucination'. Abbas refers to 'reverse hallucination' as 'the generation of more and more images to the point of visual saturation going together with a general regression of viewing, an inability to read what is given to view'.[28]

The transformation of Hong Kongers' identity did not come about smoothly under various contextual influences throughout the Handover transitional years. In order to magnify our vision of how Hong Kongers' disturbed sense of self was heightened by the Handover (I will discuss in detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and to estimate what/how it may re-settle), I will seek theoretical support from Hall's interpretation of identity as 'becoming' in the following sub-section.

2.1.4. Cinemas and Identities: Hall

Given the relationship between Hong Kong, 'China' and other nations/cultures in the era of globalization, Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness can arguably be regarded as one of the important determinants governing the development of Hong Kongers' selfhood from one state/stage to another. As I have argued, such diasporic consciousness changes along with the circumstances. It is thus expected that the resulting identity of Hong Kongers at any particular moment is prone to be disturbed and unsettled, particularly with regard to the Handover.

Important issues, for example *how* Hong Kongers' selfhood has been changing and what has happened in the *process* of such change, are worth further consideration. In writing about the cinematic representation of cultural identity in the new 'Caribbean cinema', Hall directs our attention to the importance of the process of self-development. He argues that identity 'is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past'.[29] Hall emphasizes that the constantly transforming nature of identity is a '"production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'.[30] Moreover, identity should be positioned and contextualized, as it is not a fixed term.[31] Hall calls identities the 'points of identification' and 'positioning'.[32]

Applying Hall's ideas of identity to Hong Kongers' self-transformation as it is represented in films, we are able to find that such a self-formation process is always ongoing. I shall attempt to visualize below the application of Hall's concept to the case of Hong Kongers' identity negotiations as portrayed in Hong Kong cinema, with regard to the Handover effect on Hong Kong and its citizens.

Diagram 1.4.:

Hong Kongers' Identity Transformation during Transition

(A Visualization Based on Hall's Concept on Identity)

| Hong Kongers' unsettled sense of self was further disturbed in facing the 1997 Handover. | becoming | Hong Kongers' re-settled sense of self? |

Hong Kongers' identity was a matter of 'being' at the same time.
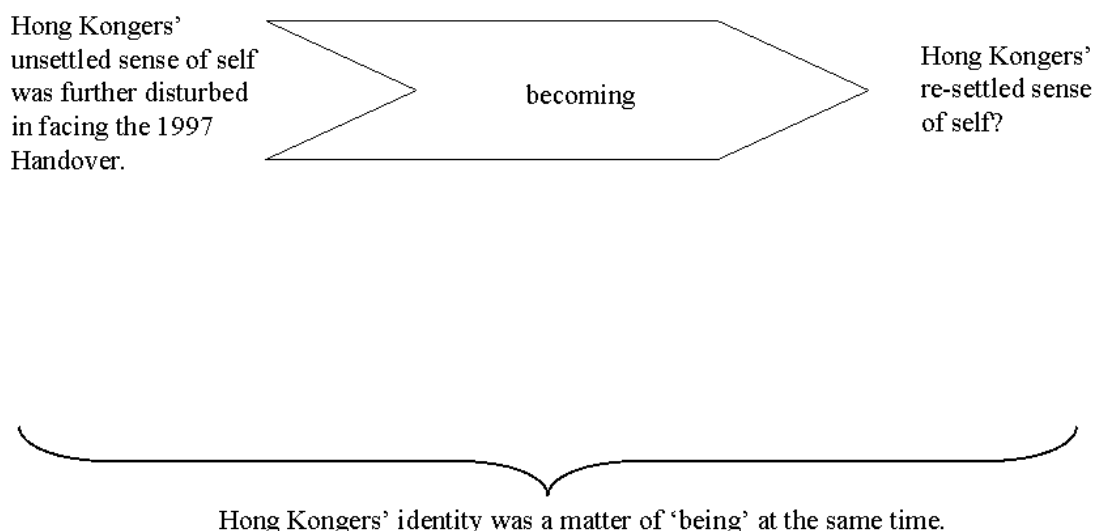
Hence, Hall's reading of identity transformation can help us to focus on discussing the process of self-construction rather than any settled state or form of identification that might stifle our understanding of the sense of existence of Hong Kongers through cinema. Such knowledge is important to give us an opportunity to look at the residual effect of the past on an identity while it is evolving into something new, just as Hong Kongers' ongoing self-readjustment has been responding to the changes in/to their lives.

By combining the opinions of Derrida, Bhabha, and Hall with Chow's experience of living in colonial Hong Kong, and Abbas' observation of Hong Kong's culture, we are equipped to understand Hong Kongers' sense of diasporic consciousness (which, I argued, is situational) and its possible effects. The acknowledgement of this intellectual awareness of Hong Kongers in relation to their supposed motherland, 'China', will then allow us to learn anew the

interpretations of Hong Kongers' identity often found in the existing scholarship of Hong Kong cinema. It also provides me with a cerebral platform for my film analysis in Chapter 2, where I will discuss the physical journeys and symbolic journeying in three pre-Handover Hong Kong films, *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild*, and *Happy Together*. My discussions will reflect on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness in relation to Hong Kongers' recent emigration waves before 1997, when I examine Hong Kongers' alterability of identity during transition.

Similarly, in Chapter 4, I will address the *Self-Other* dilemma in three post-Handover films, *Ordinary Heroes*, *Made in Hong Kong*, and *Hollywood Hong Kong*, and rethink the preconceived fixity between a supposed *Self* and the *Other*, when I discuss the interminableness of selfhood via investigating the diegetic communication media.

Besides Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, their 'Chineseness' is often a closely-related topic that invites discussions in the studies of Hong Kong cinema. The following section will discuss Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' and its related matters.

2.2. Hong Kongers' Transformed 'Chineseness'

In addition to the disputable topic of diasporic consciousness, the concept of 'Chineseness' can further stimulate our re-assessment of presuppositions. In this section, I will propose to view Hong Kongers as having transformed 'Chineseness' and that this quality has been the guiding principle of this group of ethnic Chinese in making sense of the world. By referring again to Derrida's concept of 'centre', 'sign' and 'différance', and Bhbaba's 'cultural hybridity', and

according to the interpretations of Ang and Chow, I intend to rethink what Chinese cultural traits mean nowadays.

2.2.1. Supposed 'Chineseness'?

Chinese thought has been dominated by three major philosophies, Confucianism, Taoism (aka Daoism) and Buddhism, with Confucianism having had the greatest impact on Chinese people's lives for most of the last two thousand years. Under the Confucian doctrine, the ethical/moral, economic and socio-political order in society is clearly defined, and the ultimate control rests with the emperor / the top authority. The essence of such an order is to achieve and maintain collective harmony among individuals in every respect of the society. For example, the hierarchal relationship inside a social structure (as in a family or government units) is made clear to everyone within the system and people are expected to carry out their civic duties according to their particular position in that structure. Juniors are expected to fulfil the responsibilities of showing reverence to their seniors, whereas seniors give guidance and show concern for their juniors. Specific Confucian tenets are also advocated for individuals to conform in relation to each other. Non-conformity is not encouraged, as it would destroy the order and lead to chaos.

In discussing 'Chineseness' in the contemporary period, neo-Confucianist Tu Wei-ming wrote a controversial article entitled 'Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center' to discuss what it means to be Chinese today.[33] He advocates the unity of the Chinese intelligentsia (be they of Chinese descent or not) at the periphery to spearhead the intellectual discourse on Chinese's cultural development, and set the economic-cultural agenda for those located at the geopolitical 'centre' to follow.[34] Tu uses the term 'cultural China' to depict his whole idea. He groups different Chinese communities into several symbolic universes. The first universe comprises

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Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore under a rather convenient criterion, which states that 'the societies [of these places are] populated predominantly by cultural and ethnic Chinese'.[35] The second universe is made up of those Chinese diasporic communities scattering around the world. The third universe includes individuals who are not necessarily of Chinese descent, but are interested in understanding 'China' intellectually and have discussed the cultural matters of 'China' in languages other than Chinese. Tu thus adds a further dimension to the social, cultural, and political arrangement found within Chinese communities by putting forward the concern with the symbolization and the importance of the place of origin in people's mind. Tu argues:

> The question of Chineseness […] entails both geopolitical and cultural dimensions. While the territory of China has substantially expanded over time, the idea of a cultural core area first located in the Wei River Valley, a tributary of the Yellow River, and later encompassing parts of the Yangtze River, has remained potent and continuous in the Chinese consciousness.[36]

His assertion helps confirm the demarcated, social, cultural, political, and national system of the Chinese society (generally speaking) where 'Chineseness' grows out of a 'core' that is widely believed (but not necessarily proved) to be there. Yet, in order to 'un-learn' this preconception so as to liberate our scope to learn the potentials and limitations of such a concept as 'Chineseness', I will seek support again from the theoretical ideas of Derrida and Bhabha, and the experiences of Ang and Chow as parts of the Chinese diaspora, in the following discussions.

2.2.2. Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' as Signification Structure: Derrida

We have discussed in section 2.1. that Derrida's ideas on 'centre', 'sign', and 'différance' offer us an opportunity to re-consider preconceptions, in geopolitical and nationalist terms, of the

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hierarchical relationship often believed to happen between Hong Kong and 'China'. This led to my argument that Hong Kongers have situational, diasporic consciousness. Similarly, Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' might be thought of as another kind of signification structure for constructing the selfhood of those ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong. As such, Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' could be regarded as always transforming, instead of remaining static.

Arguably, the structuralization of 'Chineseness' can also be perceived with Derrida's ideas. In such a case, 'Chineseness' as a signification system (at least from Hong Kongers' viewpoint) can be considered as a field full of an infinite amount of substitutions and supplementations between a supposed yet dubious 'centre' and the 'sign'. I will visualize this idea in a diagram below.

Diagram 1.5.:
Derrida's 'Centre' and 'Sign': Application to Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness'

Meaningless Totalization of Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness'

Substitutions and supplementations

Supposed 'Chinesesness' of ethnic Chinese people

Local specificities of Hong Kong
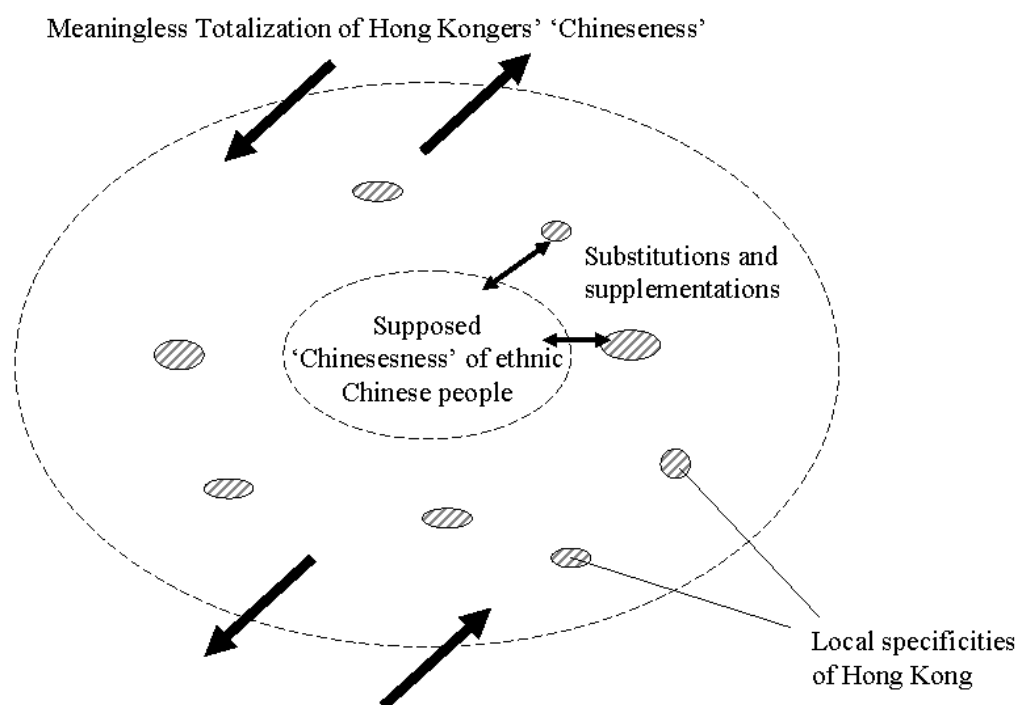
The essence of the relationship between the highly upheld cultural traits of Chinese (in short, a supposed 'Chineseness') and its applicability to Hong Kong Chinese lies in the practicability of such cultural traits in people's everyday lives. Similar to Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, their 'Chineseness' is meant to be transformed after intermingling (through substituting and supplementing) with the local specificities of the place upon its colonial experience and international exposure. If we treat Hong Kongers as possessing the same degree of 'Chineseness' as that of the Mainland Chinese or overseas Chinese communities, we may run the risk of tending towards an ossified centre-periphery complexity when there are other alternatives that may expand our scope of understanding the actual situations of different Chinese communities. Therefore, such cultural signification should be handled carefully and flexibly when it means different things to different Chinese groups / persons.

Just as Derrida's ideas are useful in stimulating our contemplation of Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness', Bhabha's 'cultural hybridity' will be useful for us to comprehend the development of 'Chineseness' among ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong. The experience of Ang and Chow as diasporic Chinese will give concrete examples from among ethnic Chinese people to materialize Bhabha's opinions in the following discussions.

2.2.3. Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' as Signifier: Bhabha, Ang and Chow

Whereas Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' can be viewed as a signification system as we have just discussed, on another level their 'Chineseness' may also be a signifier describing how 'Chinese' these people are. Again, it would be beneficial for us to adopt an open attitude to the representativeness of 'Chineseness'. As Bhabha argues:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition.[37]

Cultural critic Ang, who is an Indonesian-born Chinese descendant but does not speak or write the Chinese language, is one of those who embrace her 'Chineseness' with such flexibility. In her monograph *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West* (2001), Ang argues, based on her own diasporic experience, that Chinese descendants living elsewhere than geographical China intermix their Chinese cultural traits with the local peculiarities of their host societies. Their 'Chineseness' in this sense evolves into new characters in plural forms that Ang terms 'post-Chinese' identities.[38] Instead of being an identity prison-house, 'Chineseness' should be thought of as an open signifier.[39] As Ang emphasizes in her attitude towards her own status: 'If I am inescapably Chinese by *descent*, I am only sometimes Chinese by *consent*. When and how is a matter of politics'.[40]

Ang's perception of the hybrid nature of an identity gives her ground to challenge Tu's conception of 'cultural China'. She contends that Tu's idea is only a repackaging of the idea of sinocentrism by recognizing a reversal of the central, intellectual power to the periphery from the 'centre' on the Mainland.[41] Ang reasons:

While the meaning of Chineseness is defined explicitly as fluid and changeable, the category of Chineseness itself is emphatically not in question here: indeed, the notion of cultural China seems to be devised precisely to exalt and enlarge the global significance of Chineseness, raising its importance by imbuing it with new modernized meanings, and heightening its relevance by expanding its field of application far beyond the given spatial boundaries of geopolitical China. […] The discourse of cultural China risks homogenizing what is otherwise a complex range of dispersed, heterogeneous, and not necessarily commensurable diaspora narratives – homogeneity for which the sign of 'Chineseness' provides

the *a priori* and taken-for-granted guarantee. But in this way the hegemony of 'China' (cultural if not geopolitical China) is surreptitiously reinforced, not undercut.[42]

We can see here three levels of 'Chineseness' expounded by different scholars: Firstly, the essential Chinese values championed by strict adherents in China; secondly, the empowerment of the periphery by decentring the 'centre' through Tu's 'cultural China'; thirdly, Ang's opinion on the hybridity and transformation of 'Chineseness'. While the first two notions of 'Chineseness' point to the demarcated structure of the Chinese imagined community with clearly identified core-periphery socio-political strata, Ang interrogates the confinement of such configuration and inspires us to think over the meaning of being Chinese.

Likewise, we are able to understand why Chow criticizes sinicization as misleading and manipulative if one answers wholeheartedly to the consanguinity bond without even thinking about the contradictions entailed in it. According to Chow, such submission to the call of 'Chineseness' is a surrender of agency when 'Chineseness' 'lies at the root of a violence which works by the most deeply ingrained feelings of "bonding"'.[43] Central to Chow's argument is not a promulgation of overthrowing the handed-down belief of ones' ethnicity and relationship with ones' homeland, but an urge to treasure ones' self-worth in the relevant contexts. As the critic argues, it is an important 'un-learning' process to free people from submitting to the vehemence of their ethnicity as the 'ultimate signified', and to embrace their cultural attributes in a more flexible manner.[44]

The perspectives of Bhabha, Ang and Chow thus call upon our query about the limitations of the preconceived signifiers when they define a given cultural identity as in the case of 'Chineseness'. For Hong Kongers, their 'Chineseness' has already transformed throughout history, given their

colonial experience and international exposure in their location in the in-between space. Hence, for the purposes of revisiting the existing scholarship of Hong Kong films and investigating the identity transformation of Hong Kongers in films during the Handover transitional period, I will adopt the attitudes of both Ang and Chow. In doing so, I will take the view that Hong Kongers, in having transformed 'Chineseness', give themselves a specific vantage point from which to develop their own sense of being.

The above discussions on Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness', as inspired by the ideas of Derrida and Hall, and the diasporic experiences of Ang and Chow, will assist my contention in Chapter 3 to delve into Hong Kongers' self-construction as in *Boat People* and *Durian Durian*. In particular, I will discuss the indeterminacy of being, via the relationship between the directors and their alter egos. In addition, in Chapter 4, I will utilize the conclusion that I reach here to help me examine the relationship between the *Self* and the *Other* in films.

2.3. Hong Kongers' Identity Traits: Summary

In this section, I established the case for two important elements in Hong Kongers' identity, on which this group of Chinese's selfhood has developed in the midst of the Handover transition. The first one is Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness. It involves their problematic geopolitical / nationalist 'homeland' of 'China' that raises issues regarding Hong Kong's circumstances. Whereas Derrida's 'centre', 'sign' and 'différance' help us rethink the relationship between Hong Kong and 'China' in a non-hierarchical manner, Bhabha's 'cultural hybridity' frees our vision from the nationalist constraint by focusing our attention on Hong Kong as situated in between nations and cultures. Simultaneously, Chow's 'tactics of intervention' offers evidence to show how people should make the best of living in the in-between spaces. Abbas'

opinion on Hong Kong's changing culture also provides an important proof for us to think of Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness as situational. Hall's interpretation of identity as a matter of 'becoming' enables us to further examine the process of identity transformation in the case of Hong Kongers.

The second important element in Hong Kongers' sense of self is their transformed 'Chineseness'. Pre-formed ideas associated with Chinese culture often prevent us from seeing beyond the core-periphery structure of traditional Chinese socio-cultural community system that is operated under Confucian doctrine. Derrida's ideas again help us 'un-learn' the homogenizing tendency of 'Chineseness' by allowing us to investigate the exchanges between a supposed 'Chineseness' and the local specificities of Hong Kong, if 'Chineseness' is viewed as a signification structure. Finally, the ideas of Bhabha, together with the Chinese diasporic experiences of Ang and Chow, guide us to regard more flexibly Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' as a signifier for them.

3. RESEARCH INTO HONG KONG CINEMA SINCE THE 1980S

After formulating my opinions on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness', I shall revisit in this section the existing research on contemporary Hong Kong films by bearing these two particular aspects of Hong Kongers' identity traits in mind. My purpose of reviewing them is to check if I can make use of any research opportunities opened in the field of Hong Kong cinema studies for my present research, by highlighting these two discussed aspects of Hong Kongers' identity during its transformation throughout the Handover transitional years.

The first part of this section will give a chronological review of the major scholarly work written in English on Hong Kong cinema. Discourses on Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness' will then follow to show how the propositions of film scholars and critics are supported by widely accepted assumptions, especially when many of these studies aim to introduce Hong Kong cinema to the West. Finally, I will suggest how the use of 'accented cinema' model can help resolve problems and ambiguities if we are to put forward Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' in the film analysis in the subsequent chapters. This part of my discussion will come in the next section.

3.1. Overview

Apart from individual film reviews and critiques on genre films, academic recognition of Hong Kong cinema came much more slowly than the cinephilic interest in these films, which started to evolve in the West in the early 1990s due to the availability of affordable technologies.[45] Two pioneer works illustrate this point. They made inroads in the early 1990s to draw the attention of Western readers to Hong Kong cinema in intellectual discourses. The first was John Lent's *Asian Film Industry* (1990),[46] and the other an anthology on *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics* (1994) edited by Nick Browne and others. While the former discusses the Hong Kong film industry in the broader context of Asia, the latter carries three out of nine essays on the transcultural representations of several contemporary Hong Kong films that make special mention of China. Hong Kong cinema is treated in these two works as a subdivision of the region of Asia / China. More prominent works focusing solely on Hong Kong films did not appear until 1997.

In 1997, three major studies of Chinese-language films were published and the scene of Hong Kong film studies began to change. The first was an anthology edited by Sheldon Lu, a prolific Mainland Chinese film scholar now residing in the USA. His volume, entitled *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender* (1997), facilitates discussions on Chinese films under the impact of the West and globalization, and problematizes the concept of 'national cinema'. However, this anthology contains a significant number of articles on Mainland Chinese films in a transnational context with only two out of fourteen chapters devoted to films made by Hong Kong filmmakers.[47] Stephen Teo, who has lived in Hong Kong for years, published the first book-length historiography *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (1997) on post-war Hong Kong cinema. This English-language monograph introduces Hong Kong cinema to the West more systematically, based on auteurist analytical approach. The third book was authored by Ackbar Abbas, who has taught in Hong Kong for a long time. Abbas' *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (1997) is not entirely about Hong Kong films. Nonetheless, about one-third of this monograph on Hong Kong's rapidly changing, cultural space is devoted to the discussion of the 'new Hong Kong cinema' which, according to Abbas, is a response to such a cultural space that is always on the verge of disappearance without people noticing the change.[48] Abbas terms it the 'politics of disappearance' and underscores such concepts as 'déjà disparu' and 'reverse hallucination' (see section 2.1.3).[49] He also suggests ways to avoid the negative effects of disappearance. Abbas' insightful ideas on Hong Kong's cultural development will serve as one of the theoretical fronts informing my own study on Hong Kong films.

Subsequently, studies concentrating on Hong Kong cinema were more diversified in terms of areas of interest, whether explicitly or implicitly, with a transnational and transcultural outlook. Two American critics Lisa Odham Stokes and Michael Hoover co-authored a book entitled *City on Fire: Hong Kong Cinema* (1999) to discuss the long development of Hong Kong cinema. The

book closely analyses Hong Kong films made between 1984 and 1999, taking into account their socio-political and industrial circumstances via a political economy approach. Neo-formalist David Bordwell published *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (2000) and gave close textual readings of a number of Hong Kong films with references drawn from Hollywood movies.

In the introduction to their anthology *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (2000), Poshek Fu and David Desser observe that 'the cinema of Hong Kong has until recently been a neglected area of scholarly attention in the West',[50] and the cinema itself is marginalized both within and without China. Their book thus attempts to address critically the issues of history and identity search of Hong Kong films in both local and global contexts. Chinese-American film scholar Esther Yau put together another anthology on Hong Kong films. Entitled *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World* (2001), this book appreciates the conditions that have impacted on contemporary Hong Kong cinema. Yau contends that Hong Kong cinema, which does not confine itself to the Chinese nationalist paradigm in a transnational, capitalist world, however caters to overseas Asians in general with a certain degree of 'Chineseness'. Hollywood, nonetheless, is still considered as the major frame of reference in Yau's book. Based on Andrew Higson's concept of 'national cinema', Yingchi Chu, who is now teaching in Australia, examined the Hong Kong film industry's status throughout most of the twentieth century until 1997. In her monograph *Hong Kong Cinema: Coloniser, Motherland and Self* (2003), Chu argues that Hong Kong cinema has a 'national' quality in an incomplete and ambiguous sense, and she terms it as 'quasi-national'.

Esther Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai, who are teaching in Hong Kong, co-edited *Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema* (2004).[51] They view Hong Kong cinema as a 'crisis

cinema' in the transnational world. According to the editors, the 'crisis' in a broad sense is 'associated with the result of temporal and spatial displacements in a space of flows like Hong Kong'.[52] Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu, all teaching at Lingnan University in Hong Kong, devoted their latest anthology *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema* (2005) to discussing the transnational influence of Hong Kong action films over the past decades.[53]

Meanwhile, more Chinese cinema anthologies completed in the early 2000s give more prominence to Hong Kong films, which previously amounted to only a minor proportion in scholarly works on Chinese films in general. Chris Berry edited a volume *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes* (2003) and devoted about one-third of the book to discussing individual Hong Kong films one at a time.[54] This book highlights the studies of Chinese films in an environment where textual analysis would make better sense if historical, social and industrial contexts were also taken into account. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu YEH co-edited *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics* (2005) to advocate the concept of 'Chinese-language films'.[55] This term emphasizes the plurality and acknowledges the myriad differences among cinemas from different Chinese communities under the canopy of Chinese cinemas. Unlike Lu's anthology on transnational Chinese cinemas, this new volume covers approximately equal proportions of films from major Chinese communities of Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Gina Marchetti's omnibus *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (2006) discusses various Hong Kong films from the perspective of transnational capitalism.

Most of these publications, which were published within the last decade, carry the latest investigations on Hong Kong films. Yet, Hong Kong cinema as a cinematic tradition still has

many untapped areas awaiting researchers to explore. We will talk about several unresolved issues in the following sub-section.

3.2. Unresolved Matters

It is evident that many of these scholarly studies discuss Hong Kong cinema as part of the transnational world, where border-crossing exchanges of ideas, talents, capital, and so on are occurring incessantly. On the one hand, these transnational phenomena surpass the limits of the local and/or national boundaries. On the other hand, such a transnational outlook could also be appreciated as embodying local and/or national happenings, such that these concepts cannot be comprehended in a meaningful manner without reference to one another. Hence, in acknowledging the validity of the transnational perspective of the scholarship of Hong Kong cinema, it is also important for us to see how these studies elicit dialogues, either explicitly or implicitly, with the local specifics affecting our readings of Hong Kong cinema.

Yet, there are still unresolved matters that may have obstructed better understanding of Hong Kong's specificities and their articulation through films. For example, poor archiving of material on Hong Kong films has discouraged enthusiastic investigations into this cinematic tradition. The government-owned Hong Kong Film Archive, which was officially opened for public access in 2001, did not exist until the 1990s to preserve the film heritage of Hong Kong. In addition, scholars in the West are often frustrated by the lack of English-language material on the topics. This has not been in line with the sudden boom of interest in Hong Kong films in the early 1990s when video stores in the West became effectively the main points of contact with Hong Kong cinema for Western audiences. Lack of a thorough understanding of East Asian and Chinese cultures also becomes a major obstacle to researchers' multiple readings of these films.

Therefore, after providing an overview of the existing Hong Kong film studies and their major concerns, I will outline in the ensuing sub-sections different understandings of Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness' in these studies, which often shape the way scholars examine the identity of Hong Kongers in films.

3.2.1. The Ambivalence of Diasporic Consciousness

As an offspring of the Chinese cinema born at the turn of the twentieth century, with *Tou Shao Ya/ Stealing the Roasted Duck* (LIANG Shaobo, China, 1909) commonly regarded as the first local production, Hong Kong cinema is often believed to reflect Hong Kongers' close connection with 'China'.[56] Yet, given the socio-political changes happening locally in Hong Kong throughout these years, it is still controversial to suggest where Hong Kongers' 'roots' may be. As informed by my arguments in section 2.1. on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, I will revisit in this section several major arguments that hover around the matter of Hong Kongers' diasporic status and consciousness. In doing so, I hope to point out in the following sub-section on Reconsiderations what this research on the identity quest of Hong Kongers in films can contribute to the field of Hong Kong cinema studies.

One line of argument, as exemplified by Teo, suggests the predominance of the Chinese nationalist sense that finds its way into the diasporic self-awareness in Hong Kong films. In discussing the long-standing development of Hong Kong cinema, Teo repeatedly refers to a central reference – Hong Kong's entangled relationship with and mixed feelings for China – for the identification of Hong Kongers and cinema. China is deemed equivalent to the state-run apparatus and Teo terms such relationship with China the 'China syndrome' of Hong Kong.[57]

While Teo presents us with valuable, factual information in *The Extra Dimensions*, there are certain issues that he inspires us to question further. For instance, Teo reads director Hui's films as expressing an open preoccupation with the 'China' question after she made *Boat People* in 1982.[58] However, when Teo discusses LI Hanxiang's works, an auteurist approach is adopted to appreciate the aesthetic values of Li's masterpieces, when there are many more that Teo could have explored regarding the concern with the presence of 'China'.[59] Li was one of the three filmmaking gurus in Hong Kong from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. He moved his family from the Northern part of China to Hong Kong in 1948 before the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. Via his obsession with sumptuous visuals, the director demonstrates a strong emotional attachment to traditional Chinese culture and history in his epic films.[60]

According to Teo, Hong Kong cinema is 'obsessed with the notion of identity'.[61] However, he does not tell us convincingly what kind of identity it is and why some Hong Kong-based directors would show their longing for return to their homeland as in Li's case, while other, such as Hui who is also a diasporic person from China, demonstrates such 'fear' of her ancestral land. In short, readers will be puzzled by these different sentiments developed among various Hong Kong filmmakers who are from the same country of origin.

Another line of discussion related to Hong Kongers' diasporic sense acknowledges the presence of 'China' both culturally and geopolitically while giving Hong Kong filmmakers credit for establishing Hong Kong's uniqueness through films. For example, Chu highlights the central position of Hong Kong in the contemporary period and moves away from the discussion of its Chinese diasporic self-awareness, which the author reserves for discussing films made during the period of 1956-1979, during which waves of Chinese diaspora left the country. She documents

Hong Kong's endeavour in trying to gain independence from the influences of the two dominant cultures/nation-states, China and the UK, resulting in Hong Kong operating like a 'quasi-nation' since the late 1970s.[62] Accordingly, the identity constructed through Hong Kong films made between 1979 and the post-1997 era is also of the 'quasi-national' nature, which maintains both elements of colonization and Chinese cultural qualities.[63]

Chu's argument thus downplays the Chinese diasporic sense that Hong Kongers bore and are possibly still bearing nowadays. Yet her focus on only the relationship between Hong Kong, China and the UK generates queries about Hong Kong's interrelationship with other nations and cultures. Films like *Qiu Tian de Tonghua / An Autumn' s Tale* (Mabel CHEUNG, Hong Kong, 1987) and *Ai Zai Biexiang de Jijie / Farewell China* (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1990) depict how the protagonists are willing to make huge sacrifices for a new life in the USA. They illustrate that Hong Kong's international interaction does not just come from China and the UK, as Chu emphasizes. Obviously, then, underscoring local distinctiveness while stifling any contemplation of the link with China and nations/cultures beyond cannot make the discussions of diasporic self-awareness of Hong Kongers in film less complicated, amidst a number of other contextual factors that we would also need to consider.

There is also a line of argument emphasizing the hybrid nature of the local uniqueness as shown in Hong Kong cinema, thus moving further away from discussing the determining effect of Hong Kongers' attachment to a geopolitical China in constructing their sense of self in film. As summed up by Fu and Desser in a postmodern manner, Hong Kong cinema is regarded as 'a transnational cinema, a cinema of pastiche, a commercial cinema, a genre cinema, a self-conscious, self-reflexive cinema, ungrounded in a nation, multiple in its identities'.[64] Like Teo, the two authors appreciate the fact that Hong Kong films are always searching for an identity.

Nonetheless, the nation or ethnicity is treated as just one of the many attributes that help define, but not confine, Hong Kong cinema's perception of self, which would problematize any clear-cut demarcation of cinematic traditions and practices.

Moreover, Fu contends that Hong Kong and its cinema have been doubly-marginalized for their hybrid nature by both nationalist and colonial viewpoints.[65] Fu coins the term 'Central Plains syndrome' for the Chinese nationalist superiority view, which 'has been embedded in a centralizing, anti-imperialist state-building discourse underlying twentieth-century representation [*sic*] of Chinese culture'.[66] Fu notes that the concept of 'Chineseness' was first initiated by Chinese elites at the turn of the twentieth century to distinguish the Chinese race and to celebrate Chinese nationalism. He states:

> This Central Plains syndrome, which saw the mainland core and the outlying periphery in terms of a hierarchy marked by geocultural boundaries, was sinocentric because it enabled modern Chinese cultural elites to impose their concept of Chineseness – sinicization – on the marginal culture.[67]

The author believes that the consciousness of this double-marginality in fact has given Hong Kong cinema a driving force to project an identity that questions presuppositions and defends its own trajectory. Diasporic consciousness and cultural hybridity in this way are tools for Hong Kong filmmakers to empower themselves and to gain proper cultural recognition vis-à-vis their Mainland Chinese counterparts.

Similarly, Yau stresses the self-empowerment of Hong Kongers' diasporic experiences as expressed in cinema.[68] The urge to connect Hong Kongers' self-invention in film with border-crossing cultural exchanges is the premise of her argument. For Yau, the sense of self in Hong

Kong films is no longer the result of an imagery rooted in the monolithic Chinese national culture. Hong Kong cinema's transnational involvement, which is more or less American-driven and to a lesser extent influenced by Japanese popular culture while also interacting with various Southeast Asian cultures, is brought to the fore. The author thus concludes that Hong Kong cinema of the 1980s and the 1990s is not obliged to be involved in 'national self-representation'. It is free to explore and borrow any cinematic languages from other cinematic traditions, resulting in a cinematic practice of 'cultural androgyny',[69] which demonstrates high flexibility and syncretism, and enables Hong Kong films to stay competitive in the global marketplace.

However, there are two considerations in Yau's discussion of Hong Kong cinema in both global and local contexts that merit our consideration. One of them sees Hollywood productions as the dominant force. The other posits that a Hong Kong identity in film is constructed via the connection with and the detachment from both the Western and the Chinese worlds.[70] What Yau highlights here are in fact bipolar dominations by the Western world (embodying chiefly the Hollywood norm), and the Chinese world (that obviously has its anchor in China). If transnationalism involves border-crossing exchanges that revolve around these two frames of reference, what Yau opines about Hong Kong identity in film as a result of the hybrid cultures is not so different from Teo's idea in delimiting our perception of the sense of self infused in Hong Kong films.

Seen in this light, transnationalism as an inquisitive approach could neglect some other areas concerning self-formation of Hong Kongers in film in a borderless world. It could easily become a stabilizing concept that hinders our thorough understanding of the unpredictable self-imagination in a world where everything changes rapidly and frequently. If we are to adopt Derrida's view in recognizing the meaningless totalization of any signification structure and/or

Bhabha's idea in expecting the unlimited potentialities in the in-between spaces (as embodied by Hong Kong), we will need to treat with caution the delimiting propensity of these studies of Hong Kong films. I will discuss in the following the opportunities that these studies allow what my own study can do.

3.2.1.1. Diasporic Consciousness: Reconsiderations

The above lines of argument open up a space for us to explore Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic sense in this study of Hong Kong cinema (in Chapters 2 and 4). This is because if Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness, as articulated in films made during the Handover transition, is read in its fixity, we would be running the risk of confining the arguments to specific aspects only while leaving the others untouched.

For example, if we just discuss it in terms of a nationalist sense of identity (as what Teo and Lu have done), we would not be able to discover why there is an ambiguous relationship between Hong Kong and China in different films. Various Hong Kong filmmakers have attempted to capture, either realistically or dramatically, Hong Kongers' mixed feelings for 'China'. For example, *Kong Bu Ji / The Intruder* (Sammy TSANG, Hong Kong, 1997) tells the story of a Mainland Chinese prostitute and her husband who have committed a series of killings and identity thefts along the border between China and Hong Kong in order to escape their fugitive lives in China and settle in Hong Kong. Obviously, Mainlanders in this film are portrayed as prostitutes and villains while all Hong Kongers are innocent victims. Similarly, *Biao Jie, Ni Hao Ye! / Her Fatal Ways* (Alfred CHEUNG, Hong Kong, 1991) initially makes fun of the awkward behaviour of a female Mainland police officer who is sent to Hong Kong to work on a criminal-hunting case jointly with a male Hong Kong police officer. The male and female leads,

geopolitically representing their place of origin, later fall in love. These films thus reflect the feelings of Hong Kongers for 'China', that are indeed more than just nationalistic. Rather, they are mixed with love, hate and many other ambiguities.

If we view Hong Kong films from the angle of post-colonialism only (like Chu who has an implicit post-colonialist stance with her 'national cinema' approach, and Abbas with a more explicit post-colonial approach), it is debatable in the first instance whether Hong Kong has in fact been 'de-colonized' and/or is willing to be 'de-colonized' even after the official Handover.[71] Different Hong Kong films made after 1997 have materialized such discourse through their narrative setting. For instance, *Xin Dong / Tempting Heart* (Sylvia CHANG, Hong Kong / Japan, 1999) which is an urban romance, *Hua Yang Nian Hua / In the Mood for Love* (Wong Kar-wai, France / Hong Kong, 2000) which is a nostalgic romance, *Qiang Wang / Double Tap* (LAW Chi-leung, China / Hong Kong, 2000) which is a psychological thriller, and *Jin Ji / Golden Chicken* (Samson CHIU, Hong Kong, 2002) which is a comedy, set all or most of their narratives in the pre-Handover, contemporary colonial era.

If we see Hong Kong's positioning in terms of globalization (like Stokes and Hoover; Bordwell; Fu and Desser; Yau; Cheung and Chu; Morris, Li and Chan; and Marchetti do), there will be another set of convolutions at play, resulting in another kind of ambiguity. We may be able to find examples of the cultural and economic exchanges in the global film industries. For instance, can we say that Hollywood imposes its influence onto Hong Kong cinema? It depends. Local film critics in Hong Kong blame the Hollywood blockbuster *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993) for stealing the box office income of local Hong Kong productions.[72] Yet the export of Hong Kong filmic elements, like kung-fu components and talents (such as John Woo and CHOW Yun-fat), to Hollywood has obviously enriched the variety of Hollywood films.

On a micro scale, there are mutual hatred and discriminations between different ethnic / dialectic groups residing in Hong Kong, making straightforward study of the diasporic sentiments of Hong Kongers hard to grip in most, if not all, situations. Unlike other diasporic groups such as Jewish Diaspora or Black Diaspora, who have a clear idea of their history before their departure from their ancestral land and may have trouble being assimilated into their host societies, Hong Kong Chinese are the majority population of Hong Kong. Other diasporic groups like Hong Kong Indian / Pakistani are minorities that would often elude the main discourses on Hong Kong. Troubles also occur among different Chinese groups there, for example, Shanghainese immigrants from China may look down on local Cantonese people's roughness but these Cantonese may disdain their Shanghainese neighbours as laid-back and arrogant.[73]

In an article 'Transnationalization of the Local in Hong Kong Cinema of the 1990s', Hong Kong-based film critic Kwai-cheung Lo establishes a thought-provoking concept, that 'the local is the transnational itself in its becoming'.[74] Lo argues that the hierarchical relationship between transnational and local, and Chinese cultural core and peripheral Chinese diaspora (and the like), cannot reflect the real situations of transnationality.[75] He discusses his ideas with the gendered (mis)identity in *Jinzhi Yuye / He's a Woman, She's a Man* (Peter CHAN, Hong Kong, 1994), and the transnationality and temporal displacement of the pan-Chinese pop songs in *Tian Mi Mi / Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (Peter Chan, Hong Kong, 1996). As Lo states:

> What is discovered at the kernel of the local is always a self-estrangement. Thus there always remains, in the construction process of the local, a nonlocal that can provide a viewpoint from which the local can identify itself as something other than itself.[76]

Lo's proposal thus provides us with a starting point to re-evaluate all the other fixed, hierarchical and bipolar relationships in conferring meanings on any texts, entities, individuals, groups and so on. I will discuss this further, as informed by the theoretical ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, in Chapter 2 and to rethink the relationship between *Self* and the *Other* in Chapter 4.

3.2.2. The Uncertainties of 'Chineseness'

The second half of this sub-section on unresolved matters in the existing scholarship of Hong Kong films is concerned with the 'Chineseness' of Hong Kongers, as it is perceived and represented in films. Hong Kong films have always been regarded as lacking the genuine 'Chinese' feel of Mainland Chinese Fifth Generation cinema (for example, *Huang Tu Di / Yellow Earth* (CHEN Kaige, China, 1984)) or even New Taiwan Cinema (aka Taiwanese New Wave) (for example, *Beiqing Chengshi / A City of Sadness* (Hou Hsiao-hsien, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1989)). Both are exemplary in giving their audiences the rich texture of life in the remote countryside (as in the former) and the harsh reality of history under the white terror (as in the latter). Yet we cannot deny that most Hong Kong films are made by Hong Kong-based ethnic Chinese filmmakers for their primary target audience of the Hong Kong Chinese community, if these films aim at general theatrical release. Building on my argument for Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' in section 2.2., I will ponder below why and how these films are not perceived as very 'Chinese', as compared to those made by the neighbours on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. This will again be helpful for justifying my own study. I will discuss it in the section on Reconsiderations, which comes next.

There are some common treatments of 'Chineseness' among film scholars in the West. When these researchers write about films that have pervasive Chinese qualities – in areas such as films'

motifs, narratives, characters and characterization, nationalities of the cast and crew, and so on –
they tend to mention the Chinese cultural traits in passing. For example, in the introduction to his
co-edited volume on *New Chinese Cinemas*, Browne believes that there is 'a common cultural
tradition of social, ideological, and aesthetic forms that stands behind and informs Chinese
cinema as a whole'.[77] There is, however, no definition given for what makes up that 'Chinese'
culture and the 'Chineseness' it projects, as well as how it is different from the Western and other
Asian cultures. Browne describes Chinese cinema as 'a fascinating spectacle of another world'[78]
for film scholars in the West. Traditional Confucian ideology (with its patriarchal social order,
hierarchical obligations and lateral reciprocity) is believed to be one of the main thrusts to guide
the socio-political rhetoric, aesthetics and ethical standards in Chinese cinema.[79]

Browne's perception of Chinese films, which groups those that are made in different Chinese
communities as a singular 'Chinese cinema', is valid if we take only the distinguishable thread of
cultural values into account. Yet we might also consider other things, such as the progress of
history, political orientation, social structuring and economic advancement of individual places
that are also determining as far as film productions in different places are concerned. Browne
acknowledges later that these are the causes of the radical difference among cinematic practices
in Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.[80]

If film scholars from the West cannot distinguish the subtleties in Chinese culture, those with a
Chinese ethnic/cultural background also do not appear to resolve the unanswered questions
regarding the properties of 'Chineseness'. For example, 'Chineseness' is taken up by Fu, who
was from Hong Kong (a culturally inferior Chinese area from Chinese Mainlanders' viewpoint),
as a concept that has much to do with the Chinese nation-building agenda and the contrivance of
the sinocentric moral benchmarks.[81] Fu terms it 'Central Plains syndrome' (see also section

3.2.1.), which is a mentality that amounts to sinicization and celebrates the Chinese race and culture as elite among others.

Lu, who was originally from Mainland China, sees 'Chineseness' in a somewhat similar way to Fu's 'nation-building function', though Lu's perspective is different from that of Fu. In *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, Lu acknowledges the different trajectories of the cinematic developments in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and overseas Chinese communities and hence their different interpretations of 'China'.[82] He is also aware that film critics from different Chinese communities delve into the topic of Chinese culture differently:

> Mainland Chinese critics seem to be less sensitive to the relations of center versus periphery and global versus local that exist explicitly or implicitly in the minds of the people in these locales of Chinese culture. […] A Taiwanese critic may think otherwise. He or she may feel particularly uneasy about the 'grand narrative'.[83]

Lu's proposal suggests another viewpoint for readers to realize how different people with different sub-regional cultural background may end up seeing things diversely. However, that does not mean that such insight would help those who are not familiar with Chinese culture to understand what exactly its cultural constituents are.

Other researchers refer to outstanding ethnic Chinese filmmakers and their self-knowledge to elaborate on what would constitute the so-called 'Chineseness'. For instance, Stokes and Hoover notice Woo's strong endorsement of traditional Chinese values in many of his films, such as *Ying Xiong Ben Se / A Better Tomorrow* (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1986) and *Die Xue Shuang Xiong / The Killer* (John Woo, Hong Kong / USA, 1989), which eulogize heroic deeds of the characters.

The authors realize that the code of honour is based on Confucian and Christian values that suffuse Woo's films.

Tony Williams also refers to Woo's perception in explaining Chinese cultural ideology in his article 'Space, Place, and Spectacle: The Crisis Cinema of John Woo', in which the author addresses the issues of conflicting political, historical and cultural values found in contemporary Hong Kong cinema as epitomized by Woo's films.[84] The author quotes Woo as citing some of the valuable traditional (Chinese?) values that are taken less and less seriously nowadays, for example, loyalty, passion for justice, altruistic spirit, and commitment to family.[85]

All of the above interpretations attempt to outline those prominent cultural attributes that are believed to be Chinese-oriented, while further encouraging us to ask what specifically the properties of 'Chineseness' are. One of the concerns is that these interpretations of Chinese traits cannot be understood as exclusively belonging to the Chinese culture, since they can also be found among Western ideologies such as the Christian doctrine. In addition, in introducing these attributes to their Western readers, the authors are at the risk of losing the essence of Chinese peculiarities in translation. However, by considering the opinions of Derrida and Bhabha as we have just discussed, we would be able to embrace such cultural traits as 'Chineseness' more carefully, while flexibly. The reconsiderations will justify what my own study can possibly achieve.

3.2.2.1. 'Chineseness': Reconsiderations

The ideas of Derrida and Bhabha thus inspire us to think that in order to understand 'Chineseness' and its filmic representations, perhaps it is to better to ask what 'Chinesness' *is* as

much as *what it is not*, and to re-evaluate how it would delimit and limit our cognizance of the sense of being.

Bearing their opinions in mind, we are able to reconsider some prejudices that may remain unchallenged. For example, we will be able to tell more readily the bias as embedded in Mainland Chinese film critics' view on Hong Kong films, which are considered as geopolitically and culturally peripheral from China's standpoint. In fact, Mainland Chinese film researcher HU Ke admits in his article entitled 'The Influence of Hong Kong Cinema on Mainland China (1980-1996)' that commercial Hong Kong cinema is marginalized in China and is received as 'cultural relative' by Mainland audience.[86]

The fact that Hong Kong films have been disdained and classified as foreign films by the Mainland Chinese government even after the Handover may reveal in another dimension the marginalization of Hong Kong cinema on the Mainland.[87] A current economic arrangement between Mainland China and Hong Kong, which is the new supplement to the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement and commonly known as CEPA III, was eventually signed in late 2005 to lift the previously strict import quota limiting the number of Hong Kong films distributed and screened on the Mainland.[88] Yet Hong Kong filmmakers are still required to engage in co-productions with Chinese film production companies in order to enter the Mainland China film market. Complete freedom for Hong Kong films (especially those in Cantonese) to be distributed and exhibited all over China is still denied.

With the opinions of Derrida and Bbabha, and the diasporic experiences of Ang and Chow, we can be equipped with a more liberal attitude to rethink the issues related to 'Chineseness' and how its transformation has impacted on Hong Kongers' identity quest during the Handover

transition, as expressed in film. I will discuss this topic further in Chapter 3, and engage in further reconsideration of *Self* and the *Other* in Chapter 4, based on the notions generated in Chapter 3.

The foregoing discussions of the ambivalence of diasporic consciousness and the uncertainties of 'Chineseness' in the existing Hong Kong film studies, as inspired by the theoretical considerations of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, thus justify the validity of my research on Hong Kong cinema (1982-2002). I will carry it out through engaging debates in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 in these two respects of Hong Kongers' identity development as articulated in films.

In the ensuing section, these new thoughts will provide ground for investigating the filmmaking practice and film style of contemporary Hong Kong cinema from the feasible angle of diasporic filmmaking, which will facilitate my film analysis in subsequent chapters. I will support my arguments by mobilizing Naficy's concept of 'accented cinema'.

4. Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema: An *Almost* Case of Diasporic Filmmaking

We saw in the last two sections of this chapter an overview of the existing studies on contemporary Hong Kong films, and various perceptions of two companion subjects, namely Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness', which often influence the ways in which investigations of Hong Kong films are conducted. These two topics disclose the presuppositions that could have framed our cognizance and appreciation of Hong Kongers' sense of self in a mutable ambience. Hence, my arguments of Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness and transformed 'Chineseness' allow me to engage in new readings of Hong Kong films made during the research period.

My opinion will facilitate the consideration of two matters regarding the filmmaking practice in Hong Kong, especially during the Handover transitional period. Firstly, given the volatility of those qualifiers that have comprised Hong Kongers' sense of being, it is logical to think that the self represented in Hong Kong films during the Handover transition could be grasped on multiple levels. As film audiences, we would know that cinematic devices, for example, narrative structures, subject matters, visual and audio styles, and so on, that these filmmakers choose will determine largely the resulting manifold readings. This implies that formulaic filmmaking might not be effective enough to help those filmmakers who wanted to tell us something about themselves and their fellow Hong Kongers to meet their goals.

Secondly, while these films could not be too formulaic in confining the ways they convey their messages, the filmmakers could not be extremely auteurist/artistic (in Andrew Sarris' sense)[89] and ignore the commercial side of their film projects. This is because filmmaking amounted not only to a platform for them to ponder the current situations in Hong Kong, it was also a job that they relied on to make ends meet. The Hong Kong film industry has operated without financial support and subsidies from the local government for most of its history, until very recently when the government set up two funds in 1999 and 2003 respectively to help the ailing film industry.[90] The demise of the studio system that once supported most of the film output in Hong Kong from the 1960s to the mid-1980s further aggravated the filmmaking difficulties there. After the last production studio, Shaw Brothers, stopped financing film projects in around 1986 to concentrate its investment on its television station Television Broadcast, film productions in Hong Kong have been typically run by small companies with limited investment capital in a form not much different from a cottage industry.[91] In hindsight, small companies were able to enjoy the film industry pinnacle throughout the late 1980s to the early 1990s when the economic situation of

Hong Kong was on the rise. However, in 1994 when the recession of the whole industry set in due to various causes such as piracy, overproduction of low quality films and the threatening of Hollywood blockbusters, many of these companies suffered.[92]

Hence, many Hong Kong filmmakers, including those who are praised by critics as auteurs, would always have, first and foremost, the goal of survival in the film business by means of securing financial resources and maintaining sufficient box-office income.[93] It follows that even when these filmmakers wished to address any socio-political issues of Hong Kong, instead of being constrained by political censorship, they have been more concerned with the financial conditions of their film projects.[94]

These two contrasting concerns have been haunting Hong Kong filmmakers for a long time. How to strike a balance between caring for ideological and society-related topics in films and observing the games of rule in the filmmaking industry has then become one of the most imperative jobs for Hong Kong filmmakers to undertake. At the same time, those success stories would offer us as students of film studies abundant material to explore and appreciate film practices in different places. In order to analyse the way Hong Kong filmmakers have utilized specific cinematic devices to get their messages across while surviving commercially, I would suggest studying their films through Naficy's 'accented cinema' concept.

According to Naficy, 'accented cinema' is the practice of diasporic and exilic filmmaking. 'Accented' films are made mainly by diasporic and exilic filmmakers, who have been removed from their Middle-Eastern countries and are now residing in the West.[95] These films are thus 'speaking' with an accent in their host societies and infused with a strong sense of geopolitical orientation given the displacement experiences of their filmmakers.

The 'accented cinema' model addresses issues that arise at different stages during the filmmaking process, including finding funding sources, choosing appropriate themes, deploying cinematic presentation for the subject matters with particular mise-en-scène and setting, negotiating for the film screening, and so on. It thereby provides us with a good starting point to look into different aspects of contemporary Hong Kong cinema.

Naficy identifies seven major areas where 'accented' film style and filmmaking practices develop.[96] The first one is the visual style of the films that may consist of claustrophobic settings and/or props reminiscent of the homeland/the past of the filmmakers and/or the characters. The second one is the narrative structure. We may be able to spot an 'accented' film through its departure from the norm of linear plot development, its extensive use of voice-overs, its multilinguality, abundant use of memory flashbacks, and so on. The third aspect is related to the characters and characterization that may present the sense of alienation in the society where they are located. The fourth point comes with the subject matter, theme and plot of the films. They may be concerned with geographical mobility (such as journeys, exilic and diasporic experiences), identity negotiation, family matters, home and homeland, and so forth. The fifth aspect is about the structures of feeling in the films.[97] Certain senses of displacement, hybridity and/or interstitiality are highlighted. The sixth area is the filmmakers' location, for example, whether they are in diaspora or they have inscribed themselves on their films. The seventh aspect is the mode of production.[98] That may involve transnational and international exchanges among different cinematic practices in areas of funding sources, production, distribution and exhibition. For Naficy, 'accented' films do not necessarily consist of all of these components. These films are not homogeneous and may have all or some of these seven elements to various degrees.

Apparently, contemporary Hong Kong cinema has nothing to do with 'accented cinema', that can trace a direct lineage to Third Cinema, a type of political and oppositional cinematic practice in the Third World characterized mainly by documentary, semi-documentary and semi-fiction films.[99] It also does not have any direct linkage with 'minor cinema', which also has a political immediacy.[100] Contrarily, Hong Kong films as commercial commodities are very often preoccupied with financial matters as I have discussed above. Obviously, the filmmaking intents of both 'accented' and Hong Kong filmmakers are different, for the former are concerned primarily with geopolitical urgency while the latter attend more to commercial decisions. Yet interestingly, both 'accented' and Hong Kong cinemas share the wish to be seen and heard, and hence to survive before their target audiences. This also allows these films to share many characteristics that are laid out in Naficy's 'accented cinema' paradigm. As far as liminality is concerned, Hong Kong films and 'accented cinema' may be different in kind but not necessarily in degree. For this reason, I would argue that contemporary Hong Kong cinema could be studied from the angle of 'accented cinema' and be treated as an *almost* case of diasporic filmmaking.

In the sub-sections below, I will undertake to demonstrate how Hong Kong films made during the Handover transitional period have unconsciously adopted a style very similar to the 'accented' style (in Naficy's sense) as a technique of survival under the specific historical, social, cultural, economic, political and industrial circumstances of Hong Kong. My illustration will be accompanied by various examples of Hong Kong films made during the era covered in this study. I will focus on discussing their structures of feeling, mode of production (which includes filmmakers' biographical information), visual style plus characterization, and subject matter / theme / plot and narrative structure.

*

4.1. Re-interpretating 'Accentedness'

4.1.1. Structures of Feeling: Sense of Displacement

Naficy says: 'Many accented films emphasize territoriality, rootedness and geography. Because they are deterritorialized, these films are deeply concerned with territory and territoriality'.[101] As I have discussed so far, Hong Kong filmmakers as members of the Hong Kong Chinese community often show uneasiness, consciously or unconsciously, related to the geopolitical location of Hong Kong. In most cases, they are not sure whether they belong to Hong Kong or to the remote, idealized, imagined homeland broadly understood as 'China'. Such emotionality embodies the fundamental social anxiety about Hong Kongers' relationship with the place Hong Kong that has not given them a pure feeling of home, for Hong Kong has served in most of its history as a place of temporary residence for its citizens. Many of them always have the desire and plan to go elsewhere.

This vein underlied most Hong Kong films made in the 1950s and the 1960s during the influx of Mainland refugees into Hong Kong. Such sentiment was reinvigorated in Hong Kong films made between 1982 and 2002, reflecting that the Handover has not just provoked the sense of displacement among Hong Kong people but pushed it towards a historical high. For example, *Qing Cheng Zhi Lian / Love in a Fallen City* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1984), and *Cuoai / Crossings* (Evans CHAN, Hong Kong, 1994) clearly state that the protagonists are not natives but sojourners in Hong Kong. Yet they all end up there and intertwine emotionally with the people they meet. Melancholy in these films is often highlighted to reflect the prevalent social disposition of un-belonging.

4.1.2. Mode of Production and Filmmakers' Self-inscription

Meanwhile, with the flourishing of small film production companies in Hong Kong from the 1980s onwards, more and more Hong Kong filmmakers often found themselves engaging in transnational and/or border-crossing projects in order to secure enough initial investment capital for their films if local money was not enough. Their investors from neighbouring countries such as Taiwan and Japan also welcomed such cooperation opportunities, as they often found investing in Hong Kong films more profitable than their returns on investing in their own local productions. This was due mainly to the fact that Hong Kong films had already acquired long-standing local and overseas markets.[102] More recently, investors from further afield such as the UK, France, Italy and the USA were also attracted to join forces with Hong Kong filmmakers. There were many exchanges during the course in areas such as film narrative, aesthetic values and talents among Hong Kong cinema and filmmaking practices of these countries. These transnationally produced films were effectively shot both within the Hong Kong film industry and in between systems of different countries, leading to enhanced film products through synergy. It is in this sense that they are interstitial, very similar to what Naficy says about 'accented' films:

> To be interstitial, therefore, 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'. As a result, accented filmmakers are not so much marginal or subaltern as they are interstitial, partial, and multiple.[103]

Coincidentally, many Hong Kong filmmakers involved in these transnational film projects are prominent transnational figures, who live as diasporic people relocated from their birthplaces in

Mainland China in their early childhood and have now established their homes in Hong Kong. They may or may not perform in their own films, but their experiences often add in their films a flavour of interstitiality and the ambivalence of their diasporic situations. Several of these eminent directors, whose films will be closely examined later in this thesis, are introduced as follows.

4.1.2.1. Ann Hui

Hui was born to a Chinese father and a Japanese mother in Manchuria in the Northeast of China in 1947. The Huis moved to Hong Kong when young Hui was five. She received colonial education there until graduating from the University of Hong Kong with a master's degree in comparative literature. She later moved to London to receive filmmaking training before going back to Hong Kong to commence her directorship.

Hui, being one of the first Hong Kong New Wave directors in the late 1970s, has since been actively involved in both the domestic film industry and border-crossing projects. Renowned for her versatility, Hui often finds herself spearheading various genre films, such as melodrama, martial arts and horror. Many of her works convey her humanist stance and are attentive to human relationships from a female perspective rarely found in the male-dominated local film industry. Hui has worked with different small, local production companies since her début *Feng Jie / The Secret* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1979) while simultaneously forging partnership with Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese filmmakers and investors. *Boat People* (1982), which will be discussed in Chapter 3, was Hui's first border-crossing project. In 1997, Hui was credited as one of the writers and the associate producer for the Mainland Chinese historical epic *Yapian*

Zhanzheng / The Opium War (Xie Jin, China, 1997), a film that was endorsed by the Chinese government for celebrating the recovery of the lost territory Hong Kong.[104]

Besides cooperating with Mainland Chinese filmmakers, Hui has worked closely with Taiwanese filmmakers since the 1980s. For example, WU Nien-jen, who is one of the mainstays of Taiwan New Wave alongside his contemporaries like Hou Hsiao-hsien and Edward YANG, wrote the script for Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Hui made a cameo appearance in Taiwan post-New Wave director TSAI Ming-liang's *Heliu / The River* (Tsai Ming-liang, Taiwan, 1997). She also employed Tsai's long-term work partner/actor LEE Kang-sheng to be the male lead in her *Ordinary Heroes* (1999), which will be analysed in Chapter 4. Hui's tactful and well-established connections in both Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese film industries allow her to blend in with both cinematic systems relatively easily while consolidating her base in Hong Kong.

4.1.2.2.Wong Kar-wai

Wong was born in Shanghai, China in 1958 and moved to Hong Kong with his family at the age of five. He could speak only Shanghainese dialect when he arrived and picked up the local Cantonese dialect in his early teenage years. The young Wong felt completely alienated in the new environment, a sentiment that eventually suffuses most of his works.[105]

Wong joined the local film industry in 1982 as a scriptwriter and scripted various genre films. He also worked in companies of different sizes. In 1988, Wong directed his first film *Wang Jiao Ka Men / As Tears Go By* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1988). The box-office success of this film allowed Wong to stay in the film business and make his all-time classic *Days of Being Wild*

(1990), which will be discussed in Chapter 2. It was from this film that Wong started to build his unique film style in using devices such as circuitous plotline, expressive colours, non-conventional camera angles, jump cuts, stretch printing, extensive voice-over monologues, music montages, and so on.[106]

However, due to Wong's notorious striving for perfection in his films at the expense of time, it took him years to complete some of his films, for example, two years for *Dong Xie Xi Du / Ashes of Time* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong 1994) and about five years for *2046* (Wong Kar-wai, China/ Hong Kong / France / Germany / Italy / Netherlands /USA, 2004). This is not entirely acceptable in the fast-paced Hong Kong film industry. Yet his career has managed to flourish while the film industry went downhill.[107] Teo names him the 'perennial *enfant terrible* of the Hong Kong film industry'.[108] One of the probable reasons for Wong's commercial survival is that he always scripts his own films, which allows him to bring down the production costs even when he keeps changing the plot into the post-production stage.[109] Wong has his own production company, Jet Tone Production, producing mainly his own works. His long-term partnership with art director William CHANG and cinematographer Christopher Doyle also ensures the artistic quality of his films.

Wong had not been involved in border-crossing productions before he made *Ashes of Time* (1994), which allied him with Mainland Chinese production studios. *Happy Together* (1997), which will be analysed in Chapter 2, registers Wong's entry into the Western film circle with investors and collaborators coming from as far afield as France and Italy. Internationally, Wong is thus far the most highly praised Hong Kong-based director. He is the first ethnic Chinese to win the Best Director Award at the Cannes International Film Festival (1997) for *Happy Together* and the first ethnic Chinese jury president (2006) in the festival's history.[110]

4.1.2.3. Fruit Chan

Chan was born in 1959 in Guangdong, China. He moved to Hong Kong with his parents at the age of ten. Chan studied filmmaking at the Hong Kong Film and Cultural Centre under the instruction of the first Hong Kong New Wave directors, such as Hui and YIM Ho.[111] Chan has worked in the position of assistant director for a long time.[112] In 1991, he borrowed the costume drama setting of Tony AU's *He Ri Jun Zai Lai / Au Revoir, Mon Amour* (Tony Au, Hong Kong, 1991) while it was taking a shooting break. There, Chan made his début *Da Nao Guang Chang Long / Finale in Blood* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1993), a romantic ghost story that is set in 1920s Hong Kong.[113] It is thus clear from the outset that Chan can strive flexibly to sustain his filmmaking career within the system by making use of whatever means available to him.

Chan's second film *Xianggang Zhizao / Made in Hong Kong* (1997), which will be discussed in Chapter 4, demonstrates fully Chan's survival skills. In making this film, the director gave up the commercial practice of the Hong Kong film industry and worked on a modest budget. Together with the leftover film stock that the director had been collecting, a small crew of only five people without any professional actors in the cast, and a narrative that hit the nerve of Hong Kongers in facing the Handover, Chan became legendary in contemporary Hong Kong cinema.

Since then, Chan released one independent film every year up to 2002 (except 2001) to reflect on the socio-political effect of the Handover. They include the rest of his 1997 Trilogy (aka Hong Kong Trilogy) – *The Longest Summer* (1998) and *Xilu Xiang / Little Cheung* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Japan, 1999), and his Prostitute Dyad – *Durian Durian* (2000) and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2002). I will discuss *Durian Durian* in Chapter 3 and *Hollywood Hong Kong* in Chapter 4. *Ren*

Min Gong Che / Public Toilet (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Japan / South Korea, 2002) marks Chan's last independent feature to date.[114] Many of these films managed to secure funding from overseas sources such as Korea, the UK and France, and benefited from the exhibition channels through international film festival circuit. After *Public Toilet*, Chan moved more flexibly between local mainstream and independent film projects. He produced *A1 Tou Tiao / A-1: Headline* (Gordon Chan and Rico Chung, Hong Kong, 2004) and directed *Gaau Ji / Dumplings* (2004) (feature and short versions), both targeting a much larger mainstream audience.[115]

These three Hong Kong filmmakers strive to carve their own niches in the Hong Kong film industry while always welcoming the opportunity to engage in transnational projects. In this respect, they can be regarded as interstitial in Naficy's sense. Unlike typical 'accented' filmmakers from the Middle East who may have major political concerns because of their diasporic/exilic experiences, these Hong Kong filmmakers' survival is less socio-politically driven than financial-oriented. Yet, this is exactly what they need to do if they hope to orient themselves successfully in an environment that requires them to do so. On this level of interpretation, they are not much different from their Middle-Eastern counterparts who work in the West.

4.1.3. Visual Style and Characterization

Naficy highlights visual style as one of the signature traits of 'accented' films to underscore the displacement conditions of their filmmakers. For example, we may be baffled by abundant claustrophobic mise-en-scènes that would not normally be found extensively in formulaic films, when the filmmakers want to reflect the melancholy in their exilic/diasporic lives.

To a certain extent, such mentality also occurs to many contemporary Hong Kong filmmakers. In addition, they may feel suffocated by the difficult operating conditions of the local film industry. In order to stay commercially competitive, contemporary Hong Kong filmmakers may resort to stylized visual elements and non-conventional characterization in their films to surprise the audiences every now and then. They strive to grasp audiences' attention while attending to their own selfhood reflection. For Hong Kong filmmakers, Abbas suggests:

> The effective strategy [of Hong Kong cinema] consists not of finding alternatives to the system, but alternatives within the system. […] A certain impurity in the form of an ambiguity toward commercialism is the rule in Hong Kong cinema. But it is an impurity that can yield positive results.[116]

Among Hui, Wong and Chan whom I have just discussed, Wong is often praised by scholars and critics for his films' visual expressiveness.[117] Yet he admits openly that his innovativeness is only a way for him to survive in the difficult Hong Kong film industry.[118] In order to see how specific visual styles and characterization allow Hong Kong filmmakers to remain competitive in a manner much like that of 'accented' filmmakers wielding their visual elements to achieve their diasporic/exilic filmmaking aims, I will revisit Wong's *Chongqing Senlin / Chungking Express* (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1994) as well as other examples below to illustrate my point.

As Wong's third feature film, *Chungking Express* came as a surprise to both audiences and film experts alike and is regarded widely as a classic example of contemporary Hong Kong cinema's exuberant visual styles. Nonchalant mood runs simultaneously in two urban romances each doubling the other with names, objects and characters.[119] The first romance between Cop 223 (Takeshi KANESHIRO) and an unnamed blonde-wigged female drug trafficker (Brigitte LIN) takes place mostly in Tsim Sha Tsui and is associated with Chungking Mansion, where cheap

accommodation for sojourners can be found and illegal affairs flourish. The second romance between cop 663 (Tony LEUNG Chiu-wai) and Faye (Faye WONG) takes place in the much higher profiled Lan Kwai Fong in Central across the Victoria Harbour from Tsim Sha Tsui. It appears more jovial than the first one even though both male characters are lovelorn from their previous relationships respectively.

Brunette points out Wong's use of stretch printing in the opening chasing scene of *Chungking Express* featuring Cop 223, and Wong's indulging use of bright colours.[120] Teo favours the close-up of the actors' beautiful faces, which fill up the frames at some points.[121] Bordwell remarks on Wong's use of freeze-frame, 'slit-staging' and the treatment of the leading actors staying put in the midst of blurry, jostling crowds to give distinct visual sensation.[122] Underlying these distinct mise-en-scènes and cinematography, however, is not just Wong's astute visual sense but also the ambiguity of the geographical factor that is only hinted at in the film – Hong Kong's in-between geographical location that gives its citizens mixed blessings. This goes back to my previous point that Hong Kongers generally have a certain sense of displacement in this port city in which Tsim Sha Tsui and Central are its best prototypes. The distinct visual style in this film thus reflects Wong's self-exilic mentality as a Shanghainese inhabiting the Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong, and Wong's status of Hong Konger contemplating his uneasiness and helplessness when facing the imminent Handover. It also helps to unleash the director's potential when working in a liminal state/stage.

Other Hong Kong filmmakers may adopt prominent characterization to impress their audiences.[123] For instance, Kwan employs a *ghost* (probably embodying more human emotions than any one of us) to tell us her enduring love story in *Rouge*, when people nowadays do not believe in timeless love anymore. *92 Hei Mei Gui Dui Hei Mei Gui / 92 The Legendary La Rose*

Noire (Jeffrey LAU, Hong Kong, 1992) indulges the protagonists to imitate and ridicule (though not unkindly) those Cantonese-speaking cinematic icons/idols whom Hong Kongers once loved in the 1960s. What these filmmakers show is a spirit of fighting for ultimate survival. In order to prevent their 'disappearance' (in Abbas' sense), the best method is to disappear proactively by giving up clichés and reappearing before the audiences in unpredictable ways.[124]

4.1.4. Subject Matter / Theme / Plot and Narrative Structure

4.1.4.1. Geographical Mobility / Journey and Journeying

Naficy observes that many diasporic and exilic filmmakers like to explore repeatedly the topic of journey and journeying, border crossing, and identity crossing among other subject matters. This applies not only to geographical movement but any kind of mobility in socio-cultural, psychological, metaphorical and even spiritual senses. The subject matter of mobility is viewed as easing the personal pain of these filmmakers when they are displaced from their homelands.[125]

As Dina Iordanova notices, there are more and more international films having prominent concerns with places, migrations, and crossing borders.[126] If such terrestrial movement becomes part of our everyday lives, then displacement / journeying / pilgrimage and similar concepts would have to take on new and ever-changing meanings these days. For example, being always mobile in the case of wealthy, diasporic people is a blessing if they are compared to those poorest citizens in the First World who are stuck in their inner city home and may never have the chance to go anywhere else.[127] Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon state succinctly in the introduction to their anthology *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity* (2002):

Far from being considered a fact of real life, in film or anywhere else, mobility can be thought of as an element in the play of power and meaning within social and cultural networks of signification.[128]

As for the case of contemporary Hong Kong cinema, geographical expedition has become a very popular subject matter. Often connected with the Handover and the corresponding perplexity of the people, geographical mobility may be the main story propellant. Terrestrial movement however may also be part of the backdrop against which the narrative and the characters develop. It is quite interesting to discover that the place Hong Kong remains as the anchorage point even for those stories that do not physically unfold there. As there are different kinds of cinematic presentations and representations of these physical movements, I attempt to put the respective films into three groups below.

4.1.4.1.1. Geographical Mobility as Plot Propellant

Travel, which often generates mixed feelings in film, may be the most essential element to propel the stories. *Sishui Liunian / Homecoming* (Yim Ho, China / Hong Kong, 1984) witnesses the self-rediscovery of a Hong Kong woman who goes back to her ancestral home in Mainland China for a short sojourn and rekindles her love for her people and the harmonious country life. *Meiguo Xin / Just Like Weather* (Allen FONG, Hong Kong, 1986), a docudrama following a Hong Kong couple and their thinking process that is concerned with their migration from Hong Kong to the USA, is among the first films in the 1980s that directly deal with the 1997 anxiety. *Song of the Exile* entails fourteen physical / psychological / temporal / soul-searching journeys of the protagonists. The film elegizes for those ethnic Chinese who feel that they belong to nowhere (see more discussion in Chapter 2). Audiences of these films are often invited to share in these diegetic (and non-diegetic) journeys and feel the same as the protagonists / filmmakers do.

4.1.4.1.2. Geographical Mobility as Backdrop

Sometimes, journeys form parts of the larger backdrop against which the narrative unfolds. It may not influence much even if the journeys are replaced by some other activities, for the main point of these films often fall on the storytelling and/or the character development. For example, *Yuan Fen / Behind the Yellow Line* (Taylor WONG, Hong Kong, 1984) plays with the concept of modern individualism vis-à-vis the then newly built mass transit railway (that is, Hong Kong's underground system) in early 1980s Hong Kong. Transportation determines the fate for those who are meant to be together, yet the trains serve only as some large moving props in front of which the characters play their roles accordingly. *Boli Zhi Cheng / City of Glass* (Mabel Cheung, Hong Kong, 1998) begins with the tragic death of a pair of secret lovers in a car accident near Tower Bridge in London on New Year's eve in 1997. Flashbacks of their college life at the University of Hong Kong (a colonial icon) in the 1960s bring audiences back to Hong Kong, suggesting the director's own reminiscence of her youth in the same university during the same era. The physical journeys between Hong Kong and London are not shown. *Durian Durian* (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 2000) gathers its gravity by the natural performance of two non-professional actresses, who travel from their hometown in China to Hong Kong. They return home later and feel that their home on the Mainland is the best. In their cases, the feeling of alienation in a foreign place rather than the journey itself is the most important element in the film that the director explores (see more discussion in Chapter 3). As diegetic journeys in these films undertake only supportive roles, audiences are usually told about the expeditions only through either the dialogues or the change of setting.

4.1.4.1.3. Hong Kong Is Not There

There are also cases in which Hong Kong films do not have their stories set in Hong Kong. This may be partially due to the requirement of the original stories on which the plots are based, or may also be the result of the commercial agreement between different working units in the transnational production projects. *Qin Yong / A Terracotta Warrior* (CHING Siu-tung, Hong Kong, 1989), based on the novella written by Hong Kong-based Lillian LEE (aka LI Bihua), sets the characters free not only from geographical boundaries but also from time constraints.[129] Similar to Orlando in *Orlando* (Sally Potter, Italy / Netherlands / Russia / UK, 1992), the male lead ceases to grow old and becomes immortal after taking an elixir two thousand years ago in the Qin Dynasty of China. In order to be faithful to the original story that unfolds in different parts of China, the filmmaker shoots the film on location in relevant Mainland cities but not in Hong Kong. *Huang Fei-hong zhi Xi Yu Xiong Shi / Once Upon a Time in China and America* (Sammo HUNG, Hong Kong, 1997) brings the legendary kung-fu master WONG Fei-hong (aka HUANG Fei-hong) from Mainland China to the West of the USA at the turn of the twentieth century to continue his benevolence there. The film signifies another migration story for Hong Kongers when 1997 was impending. As the hero Wong was not from Hong Kong but from Canton, it is reasonable that we are not shown any area of Hong Kong.

These three groups of films thus illustrate the popularity of the theme/subject matter of journey and journeying in almost every genre of Hong Kong films that are set in different times and places. While some of them display explicitly the cause for the geographical mobility being the Handover, others handle the topic more implicitly and turn the audiences' attention to other diegetic features.

4.1.4.2. Voice-over Narration and Multilinguality

As for the narrative structure, more and more contemporary Hong Kong films have chosen to depart from the norm of linear structure. They may instead use voice-overs to guide the audiences throughout. Alternatively, they may also speak in multiple languages to give different levels of thought and background of the characters. On the one hand, the multilinguality of these films pushes them away from Mandarin-speaking Mainland-made films. On the other hand, it brings them closer to the other Chinese diasporic cinemas, such as new Taiwan cinema, Chinese-Singaporean cinema, and Chinese-American cinemas. For instance, in the new Taiwan film *A City of Sadness*, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Japanese, Cantonese and Shanghainese are spoken to depict the life in post-war/post-colonial Taiwan. Singaporean production *Xiaohai Bu Ben / I Not Stupid* (Jack NEO, Singapore, 2002), ridiculing the local education system, uses English, Mandarin and Hokkien. Chinese-American production *The Joy Luck Club* (Wayne WANG, USA, 1993) uses English, Mandarin and Cantonese to tell the story of two generations of diasporic Chinese women in the USA. As such, subtitling is becoming more and more important for different Chinese dialectic groups, alongside the juxtaposition of public history and private memories of the protagonists and the gloomy mood often infiltrating these films.

4.2. Re-interpretating 'Accentedness': Concluding Remarks

I have just attempted to re-interpret the 'accented cinema' model with the case of contemporary Hong Kong cinema in several identified areas. Both Hong Kong films and 'accented cinema' have their respective socio-political concerns but share a certain sense of helplessness in relation to the places that these filmmakers are supposed to regard as 'home' and 'homeland'. While 'accented' filmmakers are usually more overwhelmed by the political causes of their

displacement from their homelands and emplacement in their host societies, the financial burden of contemporary Hong Kong filmmakers gives them the existential anxiety very similar to that of 'accented' filmmakers. On this ground, contemporary Hong Kong cinema is parallel to the 'accented cinema'. It provides an *almost* case study to validate the applicability of the 'accented cinema' concept because Hong Kong and 'accented' filmmakers have the ultimate wish to continue their existence, although in different forms under different circumstances, within and astride different systems both locally and globally.

Hence, despite both cinemas having fundamental differences throughout their formation, since they have adopted similar means (film styles, for instance) to achieve the same aim (survival), I propose that Hong Kong cinema made during 1982-2002 conditioned by their special circumstances could be studied through the 'accented cinema' paradigm. I will utilize this argument to look closely at eight chosen Hong Kong films in Part II of this thesis.

5. Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I undertook to investigate the effects of Hong Kong lacking a cultural/national centrality on Hong Kongers' identity formation. I explored two aspects of Hong Kongers' identity, namely diasporic consciousness and 'Chineseness'. Based on the theoretical considerations of Derrida ('centre', 'sign', and 'différance'), Bhabha ('cultural hybridity'), Hall (identity as a matter of 'becoming'), and the experiences of Abbas, Ang and Chow, I established that Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness is situational. This is due to the fact that this group of ethnic Chinese have a problematic geopolitical/nationalist 'homeland' of 'China'. Moreover, I also argued that Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' has been transformed from its original, supposed

form after it has intermixed with local specificities and benefited from transnational and transcultural exposures.

My arguments on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness and transformed 'Chineseness' allowed me to revisit from new angles the existing studies on contemporary Hong Kong films, so that I could justify my own study through highlighting these two identity traits of Hong Kongers. After an overview of the existing scholarship on contemporary Hong Kong cinema, I noted that there were unresolved matters in Hong Kong film research. Firstly, different arguments were identified with regard to the ambivalence of Hong Kongers' diasporic consciousness. They ranged from perceiving Hong Kongers' sense of self with a strong Chinese nationalistic reference, to overcoming the constraints of the national boundaries. Secondly, film scholars are uncertain about what makes up people's 'Chineseness' and how it is displayed in different Chinese communities. As a result, they explore it in very different ways. For example, they may handle it by passing, give ambiguous elaborations of 'Chineseness', or refer to influential Chinese filmmakers to look for the answers.

Bearing these unresolved matters in mind and considering the industrial practice of the Hong Kong film industry, I then contended that contemporary Hong Kong cinema is an *almost* case of diasporic filmmaking. Although the directorial intents of 'accented cinema' are different from that of Hong Kong films, as the former are concerned with geopolitical urgency while the latter are influenced by commercial decisions, I argued that they share an urge to survive before their target audiences. Interestingly, they have developed similar film styles, which can be explored by means of the 'accented cinema' paradigm. My arguments were supported by aligning Hong Kong films in terms of structures of feeling (sense of displacement), mode of production and filmmakers' self-inscription, visual style and characterization, and subject matter/theme/plot and

narrative structure.　I will discuss these aspects in detail in the next three chapters on film analysis.

NOTES

[1] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 289; italics in original.

[2] Stokes and Hoover, *City on Fire*, p. viii.

[3] Peter Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2005), pp. xiv-xv.

[4] Safran, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies', p. 87.

[5] The translation of 'running away from turmoil' is lost in the subtitles of the film.　The lost part, however, tells the main reason why they have chosen to emigrate to Australia.

[6] *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=38918&dict=CALD>.

[7] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 14; italics in original.

[8] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

[9] Gina Marchetti, 'Buying American, Consuming Hong Kong: Cultural Commerce, Fantasies of Identity, and the Cinema', in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 289-313 (p. 289).

[10] See Kam TAN, Justin Clemens, Eleanor Hogan, 'Interview: Clara Law', *Cinemaya*, 25-26 (Autumn-Winter 1994-1995), 50-54 (p. 51).

[11] Marchetti, *From Tian'anmen to Times Square*, p. 15.

[12] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 290; italics in original.

[13] Derrida, 'Différance', p. 9.

[14] Ibid., p. 11.

[15] Derrida, 'Semiology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva', p. 25; italics in original.

[16] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 152.

[17] 'Border Health Surveillance Lax', *South China Morning Post*, 3 January 2004; 'HK Steps up Precautionary Measures against SARS', *People's Daily*, 2 January 2004 <http://english.people.com.cn/200401/02/eng20040102_131701.shtml> [accessed 6 March 2007]; 'Hong Kong Declared Sars-free', BBC News, 23 June 2003 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3011724.stm> [accessed 6 March 2007]; 'Silent for Too Long', *TIME* Magazine, 21 April 2003 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,501030428-445009,00.html> [accessed 6 March 2007]; 'The Enemy within', *South China Morning Post*, 31 December 2003.

[18] Bhabha, 'Introduction: Narrating the Nation', p. 4; italics in original.

[19] 'Interview with Homi Bhabha', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 207-221 (p. 211).

[20] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 37.

[21] Hu Ke, 'The Influence of Hong Kong Cinema on Mainland China (1980-1996)', in *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective: Fifty Years of Electric Shadows* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1997), pp. 171-178; Paul S.N. LEE, 'The Absorption and Indigenization of Foreign Media Cultures', in *Hong Kong Cinema in the Eighties: A Comparative Study with Western Cinema*, The 15th Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1991), pp. 80-86; LIANG Hai-chiang, 'Hong Kong Cinema's "Taiwan Factor"', in *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective: Fifty Years of Electric Shadows* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1997), pp.158-163; Kwai-cheung Lo, 'Transnationalization of the Local in Hong Kong Cinema of the 1990s', in *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. by Esther C.M. Yau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 261-276; Mark Schilling, *Contemporary Japanese Film* (New York/Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1999).

[22] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

[23] Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, pp. 15-16.

[24] Ibid., p. 25.

[25] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, pp. 10-11.

[26] Ibid., p. 25.

[27] Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[28] Ibid., p. 26.

[29] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation', p. 706.

[30] Ibid., p. 704.

[31] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 222-237 (p. 222) (first publ. in *Framework*, 36 (1989), 68–82).

[32] Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation', p. 707.

[33] Tu Wei-ming, 'Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center', in *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*, ed. by Tu Wei-ming (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-34.

[34] Ibid., pp. 13, 34.

[35] Ibid., p. 13.

[36] Ibid., pp. 2-3.

[37] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

[38] Ang, *On Not Speaking Chinese*, p. 50.

[39] Ibid., pp. 35, 44-51.

[40] Ibid., pp. 36, 51; italics in original.

[41] Ibid., pp. 40-51.

[42] Ibid., pp. 43-44; italics in original.

[43] Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, p. 25.

[44] Ibid., p. 25.

[45] David Desser, 'Hong Kong Film and the New Cinephilia', in *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*, ed. by Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu (Durham and London: Duke University Press; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 205-221 (p. 219).

[46] John A. Lent, *The Asian Film Industry* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 92-121.

[47] There is a chapter on *Ba Wang Bie Ji / Farewell My Concubine* (Chan Kaige, China / Hong Kong, 1993) by Wendy Larson, taking the stance that this film is a Mainland Chinese film. However, I am hesitant to agree with this categorization given the fact that the funding, the screenplay, and the crew and cast have heavy involvement of Hong Kongers.

Wendy Larson, 'The Concubine and the Figure of History: Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine*', in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. by Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 331-346.

[48] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 16.

[49] Ibid., pp. 25-26.

[50] Fu and Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, p. 2.

[51] *Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. by Esther M.K. Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China), 2004).

[52] Esther M.K. Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai, 'Introduction: Between Home and World', in *Between Home and World,* ed. by Esther M.K. Cheung and Chu Yiu-wai (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China), 2004), pp. xii-xxxv (p. xxix).

[53] *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*, ed. by Meaghan Morris, Siu Leung Li and Stephen Chan Ching-kiu (Durham and London: Duke University Press; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

[54] *Chinese Films in Focus: 25 New Takes*, ed. by Chris Berry (London: BFI, 2003).

[55] Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh, 'Introduction: Mapping the Field of Chinese-Language Cinema', in *Chinese-Language Film: Historiography, Poetics, Politics*, ed. by Sheldon H. Lu and Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), pp. 1-24.

[56] Poshek Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong: The Politics of Chinese Cinemas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. xii; Lu and Yeh, 'Chinese-Language Cinema', pp. 1-24.

Fu maintains that Chinese Cinemas consist of diversified and complex cinematic practices. Their plurality should not be overlooked. Lu and Yeh also recognize such plurality and opt to use the term 'Chinese-language film' (*huayu dianying*) to classify those films that speak Chinese languages, so as 'to unify and supersede older geographical divisions and political discriminations' (Lu and Yeh, *Chinese-Language Film*, pp. 9-10).

[57] Teo, *The Extra Dimensions*, pp.112, 128, 151, 207-218, 244, 251.

[58] Ibid., p. 151.

[59] Ibid., pp. 77-84.

[60] *Huoshao Yuanming Yuan / Burning of the Imperial Palace* (Li Hanxiang, China / Hong Kong, 1983),
Chuilian Tingzheng / Reign Behind the Curtain (Li Hanxiang, China / Hong Kong, 1983),

Huo Long / The Last Emperor (Li Hanxiang, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1986).

[61] Stephen Teo, 'Local and Global Identity: Whither Hong Kong Cinema?', *Senses of Cinema*, 7 (June 2000) <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/00/7/hongkong.html> [accessed 23 November 2006].

[62] Chu, *Coloniser, Motherland and Self*, p. 50.

[63] Ibid., pp. 98, 127.

[64] Fu and Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, p. 5.

[65] Poshek Fu, 'Between Nationalism and Colonialism: Mainland Émigrés, Marginal Culture, and Hong Kong Cinema 1937-1941', in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 199-226 (pp. 200-201).

[66] Fu, 'Between Nationalism and Colonialism', p. 199.

[67] Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong*, p. 68.

[68] Yau, 'Introduction: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World', pp. 1-28.

[69] Ibid., pp. 5-13.

[70] Ibid., p. 5.

[71] Chow, 'Between Colonizers', pp. 151-170; Abbas, 'Other Histories, Other Politics', p. 284.

[72] FONG Wah, '1990s Hong Kong Films in Retrospect' (in Chinese), *Dianying Shuang Zhoukang / City Entertainment*, 475 (26 June – 9 July 1997), 31-39 (p. 35); CHUNG Hom-kwok, '1990s Hong Kong Films – Recession in Hong Kong Films' Development' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 539 (9-22 December 1999), 21-23 (p. 21).

[73] XIONG Yuezhi, 'The Image and Identity of the Shanghainese', in *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China*, ed. by Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), pp. 99-106.

[74] Lo, 'Transnationalization of the Local', p. 263.

[75] Ibid., p. 265.

[76] Ibid., p. 275.

[77] Nick Browne, 'Introduction', in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, ed. by Nick Browne, Paul G. Pickowicz, Vivian Sobchack and Esther Yau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-11 (p. 1).

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., pp. 2-3, 7; Aihwa ONG, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), pp. 25, 64, 131.

[80] Browne, *New Chinese Cinemas*, pp. 5-11.

[81] Fu, *Between Shanghai and Hong Kong*, pp. 68-71.

[82] Lu, 'Historical Introduction', p. 17.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Tony Williams, 'Space, Place, and Spectacle: The Crisis Cinema of John Woo', *Cinema Journal*, 36, No. 2 (Winter 1997), 67-84 (repr. in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 137-157).

[85] Ibid., p. 67; 'Things I Felt Were Being Lost' (interview), *Film Comment*, 29, No. 5 (1993), 50.

[86] Hu, 'The Influence of Hong Kong Cinema on Mainland China', pp. 174-175; LI Xiao, 'New Awards Launched for Film Industry's Centenary', *China.com* <http://english.china.com/zh_cn/news/entertainment/11020310/20041230/12041699.html> [posted 30 December 2004] [accessed 31 May 2007].

[87] Richard James Havis, 'Hong Kong 1997 Testing the Waters', *Cinemaya*, 34 (October-December 1996), 38-41 (p. 40).

[88] 'CEPA Extended to HK Film Industry', *People's Daily Online* (Source: China Daily) <http://english.people.com.cn/200511/01/eng20051101_218105.html> [updated 1 November 2005] [accessed 25 July 2007]; See also 'Film Entertainment' section on the website of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council <http://www.tdctrade.com/main/si/spfilm.htm> [accessed 25 July 2007].

[89] Andrew Sarris, 'Andrew Sarris', in *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*, ed. by John Caughie (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 61-67.

[90] The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region set up the Film Development Fund in 1999 to support mainly non-profit making projects. It also established The Film Guarantee Fund Scheme in 2003. It stipulates that the government will not interfere in the theme or content of the films supported under this scheme. See the website of The Film Services Office, Hong Kong <http://www.fso-tela.gov.hk/abt/index.cfm> [accessed 11 August 2007].

[91] Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, pp. 1, 70; CHAN Ching-wai, *Xianggang Dian Ying Gong Ye Jie Gou Ji Shi Chang Fen Xi / The Structure and Marketing Analysis of Hong Kong Film Industry* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Film Biweekly Publishing House Limited, 2000), pp. 9-10, 599-606.

[92] Grace L.K. LEUNG and Joseph M. CHAN, 'The Hong Kong Cinema and its Overseas Market: A Historical Review, 1950-1995', in *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective: Fifty Years of Electric Shadows*, The 21st Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1997), pp. 143-151 (pp. 147-148).

[93] Michael Berry, *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 422-542; Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 97.

[94] LO Yu-lai, 'Some Notes about Film Censorship in Hong Kong', in *The 21st Hong Kong International Film Festival* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1999), pp. 60-63; Stephen Teo, 'Politics and Social Issues in Hongkong Cinema', in *Changes in Hongkong Society through Cinema*, The 10th Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1988), pp. 38-41; Sek Kei, 'The Social Psychology of Hongkong Cinema', in *Changes in Hongkong Society through Cinema*, The 10th Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1988), pp. 15-20 (p. 15).

[95] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 4.

[96] Ibid., pp. 21, 289-292.

[97] Raymond Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', in *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 128-135; Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 26-28.

[98] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 46-56.

[99] Ibid., pp. 30-31; Teshome Habte Gabriel, *Third Cinema in Third World: The Dynamics of Style and Ideology*, PhD thesis in Theater Arts (Los Angeles: University of California, 1979), p. 14.

[100] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 45-46.

[101] Ibid., p. 5.

[102] Liang, '"Taiwan Factor"', pp. 158-163; Leung and Chan, 'The Hong Kong Cinema and its Overseas Market', pp. 143-151.

[103] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 46-47.

[104] Michael Berry, 'Xie Jin: Six Decades of Cinematic Innovation', in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, compiled by Michael Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 20-49 (pp. 42-44).

[105] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 88.

[106] Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*.

[107] Michael Berry, 'Ann Hui: Living through Films', in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, compiled by Michael Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 422-439 (p. 437).

[108] Stephen Teo, *Wong Kar-wai* (London: BFI, 2005), p. 101; italics in original.

[109] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 101.

[110] Cannes International Film Festival, 'Wong Kar Wai, President of the 2006 Cannes Film Festival' (press release, 4 January 2006)
<http://www.festival-cannes.fr/news_archive.php?langue=6002&actu=3090&retour=%2Findex.php>
[accessed 4 January 2006].

[111] Wendy Gan, *Fruit Chan's Durian Durian* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 4.

[112] Michael Berry, 'Fruit Chan: Hong Kong Independent', in *Speaking in Images: Interviews with Contemporary Chinese Filmmakers*, compiled by Michael Berry (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 458-482 (p. 462).

[113] Ibid., pp. 462, 465.

[114] Christoph Huber, 'Curious about Crap: Fruit Chan's *Public Toilet* (2002)', *Senses of Cinema*, 24 (January-February 2003) <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/24/toilet.html> [accessed 10 March 2005].

[115] *Dumplings* (Feature version) (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Netherlands, 2004).
Dumplings (Short version as part of *San Geng Er / Three … Extremes* (2004)) (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 2004).

[116] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 21.

[117] Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p.53.

[118] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 97.

[119] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 56.

[120] Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, pp. 52, 55.

[121] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, pp. 56-59.

[122] Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong*, pp. 285, 286, 288.

[123] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, pp. 8, 26.

[124] Ibid., pp. 8 and 16.

[125] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 222-287.

[126] Dina Iordanova, 'Displaced? Shifting Politics of Place and Itinerary in International Cinema', *Senses of Cinema*, 14 (June 2001) < http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/14/displaced.html> [accessed 20 November 2006].

[127] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 222.

[128] Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon, 'Introduction: Engaging Film', in *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity*, ed. by Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp.1-10 (p. 4).

[129] Lillian Lee scripted/authored other highly acclaimed Hong Kong films, such as *Rouge* (1987), *Pan Jin Lian Zhi Qian Shi Jin Sheng / The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus* (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1989), *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), *You Seng / Temptation of a Monk* (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1993), and *Dumplings* (2004).

Part II

Deciphering the Quest for Identity in

Hong Kong Cinema 1982-2002

CHAPTER 2:

THE ALTERABILITY OF IDENTITY

> I don't know where I am, but I never know where I am. I was born in China, then my
> parents moved to Taiwan, where we were outsiders, then to the States, then back to China,
> then back here. I trust the elusive world created by movies more than anything else. I live
> on the other side of the screen.

– director Ang Lee[1]

1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Prior to the Handover, Hong Kong witnessed a persistent increase in its emigration rate. Government figures show that an annual average of more than 48,600 Hong Kong residents chose to abandon their Chinese nationality to emigrate to other countries between 1987 and 1997. This was more than double the annual average of 20,000 emigrants in the early 1980s.[2] The highest rate of 66,000 emigrants was recorded in 1992. The time between the late 1980s and 1997 was indeed a brain drain period in Hong Kong's recent history, as around one third of these emigrants were well-educated and had professional, technical, administrative or managerial qualifications. The reasons for this series of emigration waves, according to the official record, included people's anxiety about Hong Kong's future after 1997 and an increase in immigration opportunities available in a number of popular destination countries.[3]

For a small place with a population of about 6.8 million, Hong Kong's annual emigration rate should not be considered as alarming when compared with the involuntary migration rate all over the world. A refugee study shows that there were about 90 to 100 million people displaced around the world in the 1990s due to infrastructural development projects, and 'at the end of

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2004, there were some 11.5 million refugees and asylum seekers and a further 21 million IDPs [internally displaced persons] worldwide'.[4] Yet there are deeper implications in Hong Kong's case in the 1990s than what mere numbers show, for we are drawn to the diasporic sentiments and self-perception of Hong Kongers that concern the socio-cultural formation of this place.

This chapter will thus examine the alterability of identity, arising from the emigration of Hong Kongers in the 1990s, during the historic transition. I will argue that the human mobility, represented by cinematic journeys and journeying, can reveal how people adopt different standpoints when their selfhood is not yet confirmed, and as such, keeps altering.

I will first discuss such human mobility as a reflection of Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness that I argued for in section 2.1., Chapter 1. Besides Hall's interpretation of identity as 'becoming' (see diagram 1.4.), I will draw on Derrida's view on 'centre','sign' and 'différance' (see diagrams 1.1. and 1.2.), as well as Bhabha's opinion about the 'cultural hybridity' of identity between national boundaries (see diagram 1.3.). I will also utilize concepts of geographical mobility to interpret the outward movement of the population of Hong Kong. The concept of 'journey and journeying' will be chosen to elaborate my case on the extra viewpoints arising in mobility.

Three pre-Handover Hong Kong films, Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Wong's *Days of Being Wild* (1990) and *Happy Together* (1997) present different cinematic renditions of the alterablility of identity during transition. They anchor their stories to the physical journeys of the characters – a theme / subject matter that 'accented' filmmakers often pick, as identified by Naficy – to interrogate the self-knowledge of Hong Kongers, from self-doubt to self-actualization during a period when their home seemed to be nowhere. Unlike 'accented' filmmakers who

know clearly where their 'homeland' is, Hui and Wong paint contrarily a bleak picture of Hong Kongers struggling to identify with a clearly visualized 'home' and 'homeland' through a similar theme. Their films demonstrate the alterability of self-transformation during journeys where incalculable variables could possibly exist. Building upon the visualization (diagram 1.4.) in Chapter 1 with reference to Hall's concept, I shall attempt to present such kinds of alterability of identity in diagram 2 below.

Diagram 2:

Alterability of Hong Kongers' Identity during Transition

Journeys / actual or symbolic mobility entailing incalculable variables, as represented in films, are likely to affect the 'becoming' trajectory of self-reconstruction and contribute to the ways in which the identity could possibly alter.

Hong Kongers' unsettled sense of self was further disturbed in facing the 1997 Handover.

becoming

Journeying Period

Hong Kongers' re-settled sense of self?

Hong Kongers' identity was a matter of 'being' at the same time.
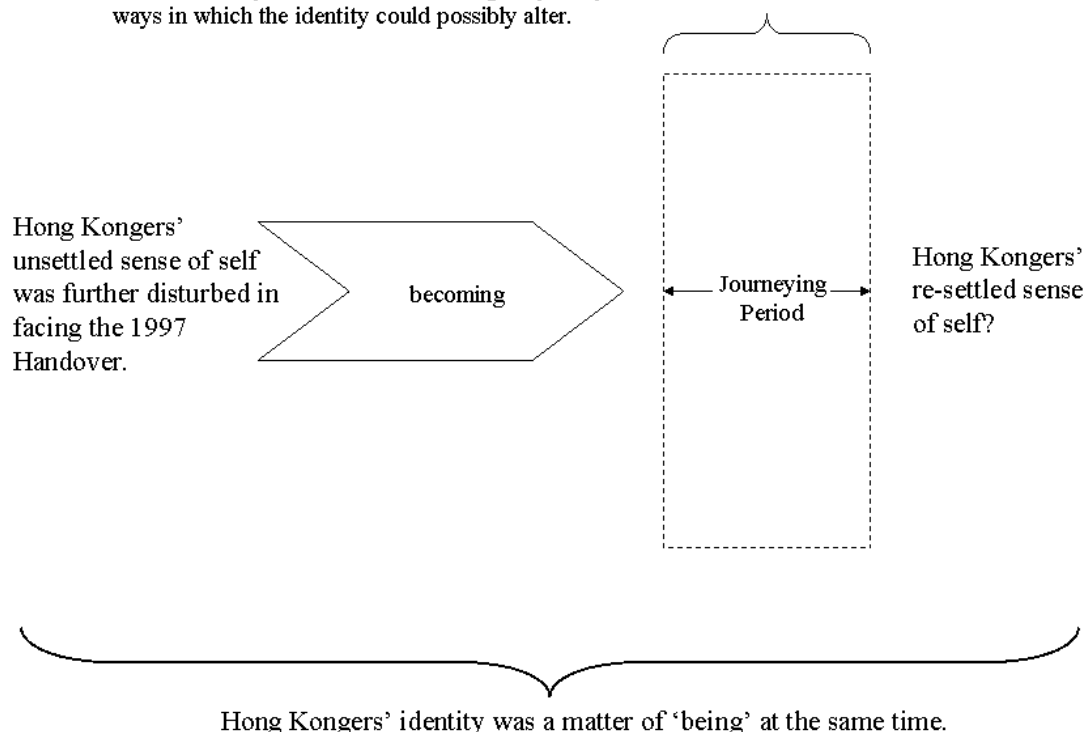
In addition to the thematic employment of the physical travel of the protagonists, I will be concerned with analysing the symbolic journeying that these protagonists (and indirectly, the audiences) can experience through the narrative structure in these films. Whereas *Song of the Exile* makes prominent use of flashbacks to narrate the story, *Days of Being Wild* and *Happy*

Together attempt episodic and spiral structures respectively. The emblematic journeying will show how additional viewpoints exist during the course of mobility. In turn, these changes in vantage points may lead the 'becoming' trajectory of identity to stay altering.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY: INTERPRETATIONS OF HONG KONG'S RECENT EMIGRATION

Hong Kong's most recent emigration has generated discussions on its nature and possible effects. In this section, I will align several concepts, including 'displacement', 'sojourn', 'exile', 'migration', 'nomadism', 'diaspora', and 'journey and journeying', to understand such human mobility and what it could imply. I will build on my argument for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness in Section 2.1., Chapter 1 to interpret Hong Kong's population departure as an indication of people's viewpoint change and their ongoing readjustment of their sense of being to the surroundings.

2.1. Interpretations

I will first look at different concepts that can be applicable to the population departure from Hong Kong. Migration experts have carried out studies that more or less echo the government interpretation of the reasons for the emigration that occurred in Hong Kong immediately before 1997. In the introduction to his anthology *Reluctant Exiles?: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (1994), geographer Ronald Skeldon suggests that the departure of a group of Chinese from Hong Kong before the Handover was due mainly to socio-political factors – the sovereignty change – as 'there [were] indeed real fears'.[5] More precisely, those were the fears of the communist state.[6] Yet if we read such population outward movement as an aftermath of socio-political instability, the most recent emigration from Hong Kong could simply be a

continuation of the *en masse* displacement of Chinese from Mainland China that started almost a century ago, when China began to be involved in major political events which continued throughout most parts of the twentieth century. We may notice that these historic incidents that affected civilians' lives occurred in almost every decade, such as Chinese Civil Wars (1927-1937, 1945-1949), Chinese participation in the World War II (1939-1945), the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), Chinese participation in the Korean War (1950-1953), the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), and the Tiananmen Massacre (1989).

Skeldon opines that there were also other reasons, most notably economic factors, for this group of ethnic Chinese to leave Hong Kong before 1997 and reside elsewhere. They would fit better in the category of sojourners because of their belief that they would return, while still some other people could be classified as 'willing exiles', who took advantage of the economic globalism and sought for opportunities elsewhere through resettlement.[7] In sum, Skeldon highlights that emigration from Hong Kong before the Handover was *not solely* due to socio-political reasons and the nature of such population outward movement was more complicated than it seemed to be. His question about Hong Kong migrants as 'reluctant exiles' remains 'not proven' because 'they are exiles, but they are not impelled to move'.[8]

Skeldon assures us that the nature of human geographical mobility depends to a large extent on the events before the people's move or the future they forecast. Apart from 'sojourn' and 'exile' that the author highlights, there may then be other concepts that are also helpful in interpreting such a human mobility away from Hong Kong.

In 'Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon', John Durham Peters defines these three concepts of mobility, clearly having an anchorage in another

contestable concept of 'home'.[9]   He points out that while 'diaspora' and 'exile' suggest 'displacement from a center', 'nomadism' 'dispenses altogether with the idea of a fixed home or center'.[10]   According to Peters, 'diaspora' strikes a balance between 'exile' (which signifies a desire for 'home' that is far away at the moment) and 'nomadism' (which implies the 'home' being everywhere).[11]   He argues that as 'diaspora' implies being tolerant of the 'perpetual postponement of homecoming and the necessity […] of living among strange lands and peoples',[12] it should be the superior choice among the three concepts.

Naficy hinges his definitions for the concepts of 'diaspora' and 'exile' on 'homeland' instead, and distinguishes them as follows:

> Diaspora, like exile, often begins with trauma, rupture, and coercion, and it involves the scattering of populations to places outside their homeland. Sometimes, however, the scattering is caused by a desire for increased trade, for work, or for colonial and imperial pursuits. Consequently, diasporic movements can be classified according to their motivating factors. […] Unlike the exiles whose identity entails a vertical and primary relationship with their homeland, diasporic consciousness is horizontal and multisited, involving not only the homeland but also the compatriot communities elsewhere.[13]

While these concepts and their definitions may help us understand the nature of the geographical mobility of Hong Kongers, they nonetheless are all built upon other concepts, for example, 'home', 'homeland', 'destination' that connote a central point towards which the action of move is geared. Derrida, however, reminds us that the 'centre':

> […] closes off the play which it opens up and makes possible. As center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible. […] It was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center

had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play.[14]

Drawing on Derrida's idea, I challenged the problematics of a 'centre' to which Hong Kongers' identity has assumingly referred (section 2.1.2., Chapter 1). My conclusion was that the relationship between a dubious 'centre' and Hong Kongers' sense of selfhood exposes their diasporic self-awareness to the influence of the regnant circumstances – a diasporic consciousness that is thus situational. Accordingly, if we hold this 'decentring' view to read the way in which Hong Kongers dealt with their departure from Hong Kong, these different kinds of mobility, be they sojourns or nomadism, migrations or continued migrations, diasporas or self-exiles, could *all* be applicable to explain any single movement. This idea is comparable to Caren Kaplan's view in her book *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996) about the difference between 'travel' (usually related to leisure) and 'displacement' (usually concerned with mass migrations) and their being not so much in complete opposite directions, as in different historicized instances.[15] Yet, as stated by Bhabha on the importance of other considerations in between nations' boundaries:

> It is precisely in reading between these borderlines of the nation-space that we can see how the concept of the 'people' emerges within a range of discourses as a double narrative movement. The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference.[16]

Hence, while Kaplan's argument is primarily premised on the function of history, I opt to understand the recent geographical movement of Hong Kongers through the whole sum of historical, social, cultural, economic and political circumstances under which this group of ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong have made their decisions of staying or going.

If the points of departure and arrival of their geographical movement were no longer sufficient (or overly sufficient, as inferred from different kinds of mobility for interpretation purposes) to show how these people might have become since their movements started, 'journey' and the act of 'journeying' could be more inspiring to reveal the (un-)changes to these people.

2.2. Journey and Journeying

Journeying, being the act of going on a journey, signifies the mobility of someone from one fixed position to another and suggests transformations. Dislocation is the natural outcome which would trigger the alteration of site/insight for one to re-perceive oneself vis-à-vis the changing surroundings. According to Cresswell and Dixon:

> The destabilization that comes with mobility, transgression, and displacement produces anxieties around that formally fixed identities. […] In discussions of race and ethnicity, identities that were once clearly located in places, regions, homelands, and nations have been displaced by notions of hybridity and disapora. Thus, when questions of how identities arise, how they are maintained, and how they are transformed are raised, it is the complex relation between identity and space that must be problematized.[17]

Whereas Cresswell and Dixon highlight the affiliation between identity and space, journey may also indicate movement on other horizons, as in temporal, emotional, psychological and spiritual journeys. Very often, journey would involve crossing the border between the points of departure and arrival (or the return to the point of origin).[18] Journey may also be outward and later a homeward trip, though it may not be as circuitous in real life as it sounds. Once dislocated and disoriented, however, people's outlook could possibly never be the same again even when they later return to their original point / point of departure. The complications set in while they are

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journeying. There may be different kinds of variables emerging to change people's views. While Cresswell and Dixon maintain that mobility involves changes to the space, place, and people's vantage points,[19] I would add that not only do people's views become different, the matters of concern would be also modified. Journey, seen in this light, is a metamorphosing process through which the travellers would perceive something new in themselves and their surroundings. They may at the same time be understood by others in novel ways.

I would like to bring in a remote reference here to illustrate my point. Different representations and perceptions of Nanook resulted during the global exhibition of *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, USA, 1922). Discussing the ambivalence of Nanook's case, Laurel Smith puts forward:

> Identity transgressions *mark* categories that may have not existed previously or have existed as unarticulated notions of cultural literacy; categories implode *and* come into existence at the point/moment where and when transgression, or the encounter with difference, occurs. From this perspective, cultural identity is fluid and mobile across space/time.[20]

If journey brings in new variables to change people's visions and lives along the way, by inference, self-understanding of these travellers in such transitional states is likely to remain altering and await further interpretations until their journey ends (diagram 2). Derrida's 'différance' for deferring meaning construction would be useful in helping us to understand the mechanism for the postponement of a re-settled sense of self. It is in this sense that I would argue for studying Hong Kongers' emigration by way of journey and journeying. This shows us their continuous self-readjustment and the alterable nature of any transitional identity, just like that of those migrating Hong Kongers when facing the Handover.

As for cinematic journeys and journeying, Naficy says: 'Once initiated, journeys often change character'.[21]   In order to see the possible effects of journeys and journeying on people's viewpoints and the way the mobility may affect their self-construction, I will examine the cinematic portrayal and representations of the movements in three pre-Handover films, *Song of the Exile* (1990), *Days of Being Wild* (1990), and *Happy Together* (1997) in the next section. These 1990s films with their distinguished motions registered in various dimensions were made during the same period as the most recent, actual population departure from Hong Kong. Arguably, filmic imageries help us probe into the mentality of the people in a way that government figures or human geographical statistics may fail to reveal to us.   My analysis will show that mobility would normally be an option for those people, who were perplexed, to change their perspectives and re-actualize themselves in their current, challenging situations.   As long as they keep changing their perspectives, their self-evolvement is likely to remain altering.

3. CINEMATIC JOURNEYS AND JOURNEYING: *SONG OF THE EXILE, DAYS OF BEING WILD,* AND *HAPPY TOGETHER*

The theme of journey and journeying has a long history in cinema.   From the silent era, we have films such as *Orphans of the Storm* (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1921), through classics such as *The Searchers* (John Ford, USA, 1956) and *Smultronstället / Wild Strawberries* (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1957), to more recent works portraying expeditions, including *To Vlemma Tou Odyssea/ Ulysses' Gaze* (Theodoros Angelopoulos, France / Germany / Greece / Italy / UK, 1995), *Ta'm e Guilass / Taste of Cherry* (Abbas Kiarostami, France / Iran, 1997), *He Ni Zai Yi Qi / Together* (Chen Kaige, China / South Korea, 2002), *Diarios de Motocicleta / The Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, Argentina / Chile / France / Germany / Peru / UK / USA, 2004), and so on. Physical journeys, through which the protagonists achieve some goals, may symbolize more than

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what we see on-screen. Journeys may be presented temporally by means of flashbacks or flashforwards to signify characters' mobility on the psychological or allegorical levels. The motions may simultaneously bring about different kinds of emotions.

On initial viewing, Hong Kong films *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild*, and *Happy Together* bring to their audiences their different concerns. *Song of the Exile* recounts the estranged mother-daughter relationship of the two female protagonists, a plot that leads critic Freda Freiberg to array it with classic Hollywood melodramas such as *Imitation of Life* (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1959).[22] *Days of Being Wild* tells the story of a group of unconcerned young adults who become heartbroken due to unrequited love. *Happy Together* brings us the difficult relationship between two homosexual lovers. Seen in this light, the common thread among these three films is their portrayal of difficult human relationships. Yet when their narratives gradually unfold, it becomes evident that these interpersonal relationships would not be easily resolved (as in *Song of the Exile*) or brought to another level (as in *Days of Being Wild* and *Happy Together*) without the perspective change of the characters during their physical journeys and symbolic journeying in terms of the narrative structure in film. As such, all these movements assume irreplaceable thematic and, more provocatively, narrative functions in these films. While *Song of the Exile* deploys flashbacks to let the female lead re-study the situations of the family problem (yet may result in a meta-perspective), *Days of Being Wild* allows individualistic viewpoints of the protagonists to develop in different episodes. *Happy Together* reveals the struggle of the characters within a stagnant, spiral structure but frees them eventually with a loose end. I will discuss these three types of narrative structure in the ensuing sections.

3.1. *Song of the Exile*: Journeying of the Homeless Daughters

Hui's *Song of the Exile* was a 1990 transnational project funded by a Taiwanese investor and produced by both Hong Kong and Taiwan companies, and shot on location in the UK, Hong Kong, Macau, China and Japan, with a multilingual cast and crew originating from various places.   Hui is of Chinese and Japanese descent, coming up with this story when she accompanied her ethnic Japanese mother to visit Japan.[23] Wu, a famous Taiwanese screenwriter / director / actor / producer, scripted the film.   The female lead Hueyin is played by Maggie CHEUNG, a Hong Kong-born UK immigrant who returned to Hong Kong to develop her acting career.   LU Hsiao-fen, who plays Hueyin's mother, Aiko, is a well-known Taiwanese actress.

Song of the Exile is based on Hui's own diasporic life.   It is structured principally around fourteen on-screen/offscreen expeditions of different duration.   The present scenes are set in the 1970s. Failing to get a job interview in London with a recently earned master's degree, twenty-five-year-old Hueyin returns to Hong Kong to attend her sister's wedding.   Hueyin's quarrels with her mother elicit Hueyin's reminiscence of her early childhood in Macau, revealing her long-standing estrangement from her mother: A poor relationship with her parents-in-law and her daughter led young mother Aiko to leave for Hong Kong and stay with her husband there, leaving behind little Hueyin in Macau.   When Hueyin was reunited with her parents, she was already a teenager and only then did she discover that her mother is an ethnic Japanese, the reason why Aiko was not welcomed by her parents-in-law in her traditional Chinese conjugal family.   Teenage Hueyin did not stay long in her Hong Kong home before going to the boarding school, and later, receiving her university education in the UK.

After her sister's wedding and migration to Canada, adult Hueyin accompanies her mother to pay a homecoming visit to Japan, where Aiko recounts her own diasporic story to Hueyin. They eventually reconcile and return to their present home in Hong Kong. The film ends with Hueyin's journey to visit her ageing grandparents who have left Macau for their ancestral home in China.

Not surprisingly, critical studies concentrate on *Song of the Exile*'s thematic exploration. Naficy reads Hui's film as an exilic film in which the two protagonists are troubled about where their real 'home' is after living in different places throughout the years.[24] Their concern for a 'homeland' and their lack of affiliation with it have always loomed large. Accompanying the 'homeland' is the action or desire to 'return'. Naficy notices that the reconciliations found in this film 'are all structured by the discourse of return'.[25] In reviewing Hui's film, CHUA Siew Keng notes that the status of 'exile' can be self-imposed and self-constructed while 'home' is also questionable and could at times be part of the exilic journey.[26] She reads the relationship between 'home' and 'exile' as being relational and interdependent:

> What comes through strongly in the film […] is that the exile feels a sense of sadness in losing the originary home, but also a sense of loss (therefore, melancholy, too) in returning to the originary 'home'. Thus the discourse/nexus of 'home' constructs the subject's 'exile'. 'Home' only signifies when played against 'exile' and vice versa.[27]

Abbas suggests that the journeys in Hui's film could be appreciated through 'family romance' and the treatment of 'space'. For Abbas, 'family romance' functions as 'social allegory' to show the 'emotional confusions about "home" that result from a rapidly changing cultural space'.[28] Patricia Brett Erens interprets Hui's film as a site for the director and Hong Kongers to negotiate their Chinese identity through the construction of memory.[29] The author's emphasis is thus

consistent with Hui's remarks about her mother's 'laughable' and 'escapist' dwelling on the past when, as a diasporic Japanese, she has already been localized in Hong Kong.[30] Hui reveals: 'When she [Hui's mother] was in Hong Kong, all she did was scream for her homeland, but when she finally went back to Japan she didn't appreciate it at all'.[31]

Although *Song of the Exile* reflects Hui's private story, the director believes that it was also relevant to the emigrant Hong Kongers when they were adjusting themselves to their new lives as immigrants to their destination countries.[32] Hui mentions her more general concern about the notion of identity:

> When we were in high school and college we had to read a lot of novels about home, the motherland, and love of one's country, but in reality when it was played out in this form in my own life, I realized that things were not always as they were presented to us. The concept that we should unconditionally love our homeland was just an idea that had been drummed into our heads, and I was beginning to grow skeptical of such concepts. But my skepticism was not just about the concepts of one's homeland, but about all conceptions of identity and nationality.[33]

Critics' discussions and Hui's opinion thus direct us to think over the deeper meanings as exemplified in this film. Yet certain issues would merit our further attention. Firstly, as previously discussed, Hong Kongers do have trouble in identifying with a fixed 'homeland' (as evident in Hui's statement above). The problematic concept of 'homeland' has resulted in Hong Kongers' tendency to feel themselves as both a Chinese diaspora and *not*-Chinese diaspora concurrently. Like many of her Hong Kong contemporaries, Hui and her alter ego Hueyin are disturbed due to their questionable 'home' and 'homeland'. This then prompts us to investigate the opportunities and limitations of people's identification, reliant on another, unfixed concept. Secondly, if the geographical mobility of Hong Kongers allows them to always adjust their

vantage points, the matters with people's self-assertion are further complicated. Thirdly, the way in which Hui shows us the protagonists' mentality is important, as it either encourages us to agree with the director's view or deflects our attention. I will analyse below the narrative and thematic deployment of journeys and allegorical journeying (presented by means of flashbacks in Hui's film) in assisting us to contemplate these issues.

3.1.1. Narrating through Flashbacks

In delivering her message about one's relationship with the contestable 'home' and 'homeland', Hui deploys actual, physical journeys, as well as journeys in terms of flashback sequences and their specific arrangement as storytelling devices. Besides skilfully encapsulating Hui's worldview, I would argue, the flashback journeys in particular give the protagonists (and indirectly, the audiences) the opportunity to look at their own situations retrospectively time and again. Hence, they add texture and create depth in the protagonists' thoughts when they are trying to re-estimate their past situations during their journeying period (which is applicable to Hong Kongers' case as shown in diagram 2). Their sense of being would change accordingly. Yet Hueyin's voice-overs, in introducing most flashbacks, allow an overarching meta-perspective that would, however, delay her self-readjustment process when her circumstances change.

3.1.1.1. Flashback Journeys: Arrangement and Functions

These journeys are specially sequenced in Hui's film. They involve physical and psychological travel, as well as journeys in the present scenes and those going back to the past in flashbacks. In order of occurrence within the plot, they are:

1. adult Hueyin returning to Hong Kong from the UK after graduation (present journey shown on-screen)

2. adult Hueyin reminiscing about her early childhood in Macau (in flashback)

3. Hueyin's parents relocating from Macau to Hong Kong (in flashback)

4. teenage Hueyin moving from Macau to Hong Kong to join her parents (in flashback)

5. grandparents returning to Mainland China from Macau (told by adult Hueyin in voice-over)

6. teenage Hueyin moving from home to the boarding school (in flashback) and later to the UK for university education (journey skipped)

7. Hueyin's sister migrating from Hong Kong to Canada with her husband (present journey, not shown)

8. adult Hueyin and middle-aged mother Aiko travelling from Hong Kong to Japan (present journey shown on-screen)

9. middle-aged Aiko reminiscing about her own past in Manchuria, China (in flashback)

10. young Aiko leaving Japan to join her brother's family in Manchuria (not shown, only told by middle-aged Aiko in dialogue with other characters)

11. Aiko's brother and his family being deported from Manchuria back to Japan after the World War II (journey not shown, only told by middle-aged Aiko in dialogue with adult Hueyin)

12. Aiko and her husband (that is, Hueyin's father) moving from Manchuria to Macau after getting married (ellipsis in film)

13. middle-aged Aiko and adult Hueyin ending the Japan trip and going back to Hong Kong (told by adult Hueyin in voice-over)

14. adult Hueyin visiting her ageing grandparents in Guangzhou, China (present journey shown on-screen)

Thus, within the running time of around ninety minutes, *Song of the Exile* includes fourteen journeys each of which crosscuts one another to unveil the protagonists' lives and mindsets.

The acts of journeying (and the incidents they represent) are triggered mostly by family conflicts and presented on-screen through flashbacks, and flashbacks within flashbacks, thereby departing from the norm of linear narrative structure. As Hui says:

There is ceaseless mobility in the structure. […] It starts at a certain point and ends at another but never really returns to the original point. Fragmental structure occurs in the middle of the film. There are also changes in the primary and secondary structures. That makes the film very interesting and unconventional.[34]

The director reveals her initial hesitation to use flashbacks, which complicate the film structure and make the film appear literary and old-fashioned. Wu's forceful screenplay convinced Hui to change her mind.[35]

Abbas believes that the flashback technique in this film gives a narrative structure that is more spatial than chronological in unearthing the protagonists' background. It shows us:

[…] a past and a present that do not quite mesh, that seem initially to contradict each other; but it is these discrepancies that force a re-evaluation of both memory and experience.[36]

His opinion contrasts with that of Chow who thinks of this film as having nostalgic tendency due to its 'temporal dislocation'.[37] Yet when talking about the relationship between this film and the cultural space of Hong Kong, Abbas does not agree with the way in which Hui extends the feeling of 'déjà disparu' (disappearance of something valuable, for example, past memories) from the domestic scene to address Hong Kong's socio-cultural environment. Abbas argues:

On one level the film clearly situates Hong Kong in relation to other social-affective spaces – London, Macau, Japan, Manchuria, China – and suggests that Hong Kong as a place can only be constructed out of its shifting relationships with these *elsewheres*. Yet on another level, especially toward the end of the film, a simpler account of Hong Kong as a 'home' that one can come back to, as a definite somewhere with its own internalized history, becomes dominant. Understanding, then, becomes based to a certain extent on simplification, both spatial and affective. As a result, despite all its insights (for example, that the

grandparents' patriotism is a form of ethnocentricity) and its concern with social and political issues, *Song of the Exile* remains largely just another private story.[38]

Nevertheless, if we view these flashbacks as vehicles for symbolic journeys to the past, we are able to recognize the progressiveness of this film with regard to Hong Kong society at large. These flashbacks have at least two functions. Apart from enabling mobility from one place / time/ emotional state to another, they always help modify protagonists' (and indirectly, the audiences') vantage point. Naficy assures this point in reviewing Hui's film:

> As forms of symbolic return, flashbacks overdetermine the structure of return in the film. They also function to shift the film's viewpoint, from daughter to mother.[39]

On the one hand, in substantiating Abbas' argument that 'déjà disparu' has possibly occurred, flashbacks lead people to perceive that something which is supposed to be there is not and cannot be there anymore for them to keep forever. On the other hand, while identity negotiation may require the ongoing development of people's senses, journeying mainly by means of flashbacks in *Song of the Exile* provides them (both protagonists and audiences) with imaginary recess to rethink their own situations before moving on to further construct their selfhood. Applied to Hong Kongers' case, instead of de-energizing the self-formation process, such an opportunity of re-thinking in the pausing state/stage during a journey helps heighten the alterability of identity as long as the experiences and perspectives of the individuals keep altering amidst the contextual change under the Handover influence. As Hall postulates:

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of

becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves.[40]

In this regard, Abbas' criticism of 'Hong Kong as "home"' towards the end of Hui's film would become less convincing. This is because those flashbacks prior to the finale spare the protagonists (and the audiences) the trouble of anchoring their sense of being to a 'definite somewhere' when they keep readjusting their standpoints from flashback to flashback. It becomes evident when Hueyin's visit to her grandparents, in the finale, punctuates her perspective shift before she moves on, as visually signified by the 'bridge' shot (Still 1) that corresponds with the River Thames bridge setting in the opening sequence.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 1: The 'bridge' shot in Guangzhou in the finale.

We can thus see that flashback journeys in Hui's film play the crucial roles of, firstly, propelling the story, and secondly, re-arraying the vantage points for protagonists' (and indirectly, audiences') better judgement of the circumstances when a fixed frame of reference is lacking.

3.1.1.2. Examples

Two consecutive flashback sequences illustrate my point further. They appear about one-third into the film and show us a change in perspective from Aiko's to Hueyin's. In putting them next to each other, the director allows Hueyin to re-scrutinize a past that could have been overlooked.

The first flashback, shot from middle-aged Aiko's viewpoint, goes from a night scene in 1970s Hong Kong to 1950s Macau after Aiko runs off from a quarrel with adult Hueyin. It traces the root of Aiko's sadness in her estranged conjugal home in Macau when her husband was working in Hong Kong. In this flashback, young Aiko is framed in medium shot and enwrapped by the feelings of alienation. Crosscutting Aiko crying in her room with her mother-in-law badmouthing her in the living room, this sequence culminates in Aiko's move to Hong Kong while young Hueyin insists on staying with her grandparents in Macau. It ends with Aiko and her husband standing on the boat deck on their way to Hong Kong.

Non-diegetic music follows to indicate the impending perspective change from the mother's to the daughter's. The director sutures visually their exilic sentiments by first taking the viewpoint of young Aiko (looking out to the sea in Still 2), across the seawater, then matching with the perspective of teenage Hueyin (looking at the same sea from the boat deck years later in Still 3). This is when Hueyin is arranged to reunite with her parents in Hong Kong. Thereafter, Hueyin starts to recount her own exilic life.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 2: Young Aiko (beside her husband) is looking at the sea on the boat from Macau to Hong Kong.

Still 3: Teenage Hueyin is looking at the same sea years later on her way from Macau to Hong Kong.

Through these consecutive flashbacks, Hueyin is given a second chance to study the whole situation once again from an entirely new perspective, and to sympathize with Aiko's suffering. Accordingly, Hueyin is able to dismiss her early prejudices and moves on.

3.1.1.3. Journey Interruption

Hui maintains Hueyin as the major storyteller, and most of the flashbacks are shot from Hueyin's viewpoint to see how she re-understands the past and its relation to the present. On top of that, however, Hueyin is *also* given a meta-perspective besides the vantage points of hers and Aiko's in their respective flashback sequences. This is shown by Hueyin's voice-over in the opening, telling us that she was twenty-five years old when this story began. This voice-over sets the stage for the ensuing scenes to unreel while assuring us that the whole film is actually her recollection.

If we imagine that every flashback sequence is a journey through which the protagonists would change their perspectives to look at ways that would help resolve their entrenched problems, the addition of Hueyin's meta-perspective may ironically block her view in conceiving every possible solution to her problems. As in the example just cited, young Aiko is upset upon

communication breakdown with her parents-in-law and we are introduced to this theme from middle-aged Aiko's viewpoint to try and understand why. However, the whole incident is also re-considered from adult Hueyin's meta-perspective, indicating that her subjectivity ultimately presides. This allows her to understand thoroughly her past and her mother's past in relation to her present in the 1970s, as well as her more recent present as indicated by her meta-voice-over. We understand from Derrida's concept of 'play' that there will be constant substitutions and supplementations between the 'centre' and the 'sign', which would open up infinitely the 'field' for discourse. According to Derrida,

> In the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse. […] The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely.[41]

In this sense, Hueyin's subjectivity, which becomes the new frame of reference in this film to replace her dubious 'home' and 'homeland', turns into the 'transcendental signified' to fix the perceptions of what she re-learns. This would lead her to the dilemma of getting stuck and not seeing other opportunities to continue re-interpreting herself and her family's situations. The director's purpose of using flashback journeys for channelling emotions and eliminating misunderstandings in this film would be counteracted.

Hence, while I have gone away from Abbas' spatial concern and Chow's temporal concern with the narrative structure of this film and agreed with Naficy's opinion on the use of flashbacks to add in new viewpoints in this film, my study of them as informed by Derrida's ideas leads me to be cautious in measuring effects of these flashbacks and the way in which Hui presents them. Conversely, in *Days of Being Wild*, Wong does not opt for a meta-perspective in using voice-overs for narration purposes. I will discuss below how his protagonists in this film accomplish

uninterrupted self-orientation through circuitous and episodic narrative, together with stylized camerawork among other visual features.

3.2. *Days of Being Wild*: **Journeying of the Unconcerned Rebels**

Days of Being Wild was released in 1990 as Wong's second feature, funded by the same Hong Kong production company In-Gear as that of the director's début *As Tears Go By*.[42] It was scripted by Wong and planned originally as the first part of a dyad set in 1960 and 1966 respectively, though the 1966 segment was later aborted.[43] Shot on location in Hong Kong and the Philippines, this film was reputed as the most expensive Hong Kong film ever made because of its costly superstar cast, but the film did not bring home satisfactory box-office income.[44] Nevertheless, with the breakthrough including using non-linear, circuitous narrative structure and departure from generic formula among other features, the film earned Wong the Best Director Award at the 10th Hong Kong Films Awards (Hong Kong equivalent for the Oscar Awards) in 1991.[45] At the 24th Hong Kong Films Awards in 2005, it came third among 100 best Chinese films made during the first century of Chinese cinemas.

As a non-genre film, *Days of Being Wild* tells the story of six young adults in the Hong Kong of 1960. The protagonists are not as anti-social and rebellious as the film's Chinese title *A Fei Zhengzhuan* (literally, the story of rebels) suggests, but they are all too self-centred for a bygone era that the director remembers as pleasing in every respect.[46] Yuddy (Leslie CHEUNG) is a handsome but unemployed womanizer brought up by his foster mother Rebecca (Rebecca PAN) who used to work as a dancehall courtesan. Yuddy's biological mother comes from a rich family in the Philippines and has been supporting their well-off lives since he was abandoned as a baby. After pestering Rebecca for years about the information of his biological parents whom he has

never met, Yuddy finally gets the answer from Rebecca when she decides to emigrate to the USA. Yuddy then journeys to the Philippines to visit his biological mother but she refuses to see him.

Meanwhile, Yuddy has broken up successively with two women in Hong Kong for fear of commitment. The first woman is Lizhen (Maggie Cheung), a shy tuck shop worker. The second is Mimi (aka Lulu) (Carina LAU), a possessive dancehall courtesan. Yuddy's unemployed buddy Zeb (Jacky CHEUNG) secretly falls for Mimi but his love is unrequited. On the other hand, policeman Tide (Andy LAU) is attracted to Lizhen, though he later chooses to leave Hong Kong to work as a sailor. Shortly after Tide bumps into Yuddy in the Philippine Chinatown, Yuddy is shot dead by Philippine gangsters in an illegal passport deal. Like Yuddy's reincarnation, an unidentified man (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) is featured in a two-and-half-minute-long non-dialogued take in the finale when he is grooming himself meticulously in his small, dimly-lit room before going out.

Similar to *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild* is among the corpus of Hong Kong films that are imbued with a dismal mood, either explicitly or implicitly, referring to the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 and the imminent 1997 Handover.[47] Moreover, Marchetti notes that the filmmakers 'look at their current situation with regard to the People's Republic through the prism of a previous era'[48] in the 1960s. Wong hints at this idea when he discusses re-creating the 1960 ambience entirely from his own memory, believing that memory is about a 'sense of loss'.[49] Enchanted by the atmosphere of the 1960s, Wong states elsewhere that memory and time always indicates a 'loss of innocence'.[50] Wong's preoccupation with the topic of 'time' thus leads Tony Rayns to regard the director as the 'poet of time'.[51] In their article 'Trapped in the Present: Time in the Films of Wong Kar-Wai', Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli refer to Wong as the

'psychologist of time'.[52]   Monographing on Wong's oeuvre, Teo comments that *Days of Being Wild* associates more with the time period and the social factors than with the genre.[53] Underneath this argument is an affirmation of Wong's propensity to embrace the 1960s sentiments with his 1990s point of view.

We may notice that the director channels his intent through the characterization of his protagonists. Similar to Hong Kongers living in the 1990s and perplexed by the impending Handover, everyone in this film is discontented with their current situations in 1960.[54] Most of them desire to leave Hong Kong for somewhere else to start their lives all over again, for example, Yuddy goes to the Philippines. He is followed by Mimi. Rebecca goes to the USA while Tide leaves Hong Kong for his sailing job. Wong nonetheless does not show us their actual journeys. Instead, he deploys a circuitous and episodic narrative structure and stylized camerawork among other features that, I would argue, attain a sense of journeying within the film, and allow us to witness how his protagonists vividly develop their thinking independently during a time when they feel puzzled. I will investigate his approach in the following sub-sections.

3.2.1. Narrating in Relay

Days of Being Wild with its circuitous, episodic narrative structure offers an example of symbolic representation of journeying in film, as individual stories and the mindsets of characters develop through travelling allegorically from one episode to another with a hint of returning to the point of origin in the final episode. Yet the self-centred, individualistic outlook of each protagonist may suggest that their shift of viewpoint can be done regardless of the contexts. Translating this idea into diagram 2 to see how Hong Kongers readjust their sense of being regarding the

Handover effect, I believe that identity negotiation during the symbolic journeying period in this film could go uninterrupted and be continuously altered before the next stage of selfhood is reached.

3.2.1.1. Episodic Journeys: The Flow

We shall first look at *Days of Being Wild*'s circuitous, episodic narrative structure that embodies emblematic journeying through this film alongside its protagonists' physical journeys. When asked about his special structural arrangement in *Days of Being Wild*, Wong states that he did it by restructuring and breaking the story into different short stories and putting them back together.[55] Teo traces the inspiration for this kind of narrative structure and character development to Argentinian writer Manuel Puig's novel *Heartbreak Tango*.[56] This attests to Wong's claim that:

> Few people would pay attention to the method of storytelling. So I [Wong] decided to work on the narrative structure, making it unpredictable for the audiences to guess what would come next. I think that surprise is very important.[57]

Circuitous, episodic narrative structure was innovative in the 1990 Hong Kong cinema. We may find similar trails in films made elsewhere often for smaller and specific audiences. For example, *L'Appartement / The Apartment* (Gilles Mimouni, France / Italy / Spain, 1996), *Dayereh / The Circle* (Jafar Panahi, Iran / Italy / Switzerland, 2000), *Irreversible* (Gaspar Noé, France, 2002), and *Ten* (Abbas Kiarostami, France / Iran / USA, 2002) are some recent works having roundabout and fragmented narrative structures with corresponding viewpoint change that would give their audiences a sense of meandering throughout. Other works, such as the Japanese classic

Rashômon / Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950), may change only the film perspective without other kinds of ancillary textual mobility.

Critics have different opinions on the narrative structure of *Days of Being Wild*. For example, in reviewing Wong's cinema, Curtis K. Tsui suggests the interpersonal relationship and the order of protagonists' appearance in this film as a 'multilevelled web'.[58] The author notes that 'different spaces and times are intercut and juxtaposed so that each one appears and then disappears, only to be replaced by another'.[59] Abbas argues that 'this serial structure of repetition, exchange, and transference seems to have an independent life of its own. It binds the characters, smothers the violence, and limits the possibility of rebellion […] [and] inhibit[s] movement'.[60]

Let us imagine that watching a film is like witnessing the protagonists embarking on their journey from the opening scene (point of departure) until the journey ends in the finale (arrival at the destination / returning to the point of origin). Fragmented and episodic narrative would symbolize complications that occur during such a journey. This symbolism is obvious in the structures of *Ten* and *The Circle*, as their episodes illuminate the harsh lives of individual females living in patriarchal Iran. *Days of Being Wild*, however, offers us a new experience of the protagonists when we consider their individualistic and sometimes even narcissistic outlook. For example, Tsui notices their narcissistic use of mirrors and the way they are filmed alone.

> Every main character is shown both 'in the flesh' and as a separate image reflected by mirrors, illustrating their potentially fragmented identities.[61]

Focus on the individuality of each character thus distinguishes *Days of Being Wild* from *Song of the Exile* when both films attempt to handle viewpoint shifts that generate filmic mobility in

between episodes. Their major difference lies in the use of voice-overs to accompany the episodes. Although both films are non-linearly structured and have voice-over narration, *Days of Being Wild* does not have the meta-perspective, as articulated through Hueyin's voice-over in *Song of the Exile*. Instead, *Days of Being Wild* (with its episodic plot) has all the protagonists taking turns to be the lead character, and sometimes also offering voice-over narration / monologues to occupy the subjective perspective in his/her respective episode. Rather than pile up the viewpoints vertically in any particular scene as in *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild* spreads the vantage points of its protagonists over an imaginary, horizontal plane. As Wong maintains: 'My film doesn't have a [uni-dimensional] story, the plot is entirely developed from the characters. I feel that the story isn't important, the characters are important'.[62] Wong regards his films as 'character films'.[63] Hence, even though the main story of *Days of Being Wild* spins around Yuddy, he is not always given the subjective vantage point. Sometimes things are seen through his eyes and shot from his standpoint (Still 4), while at other times he is the object of the erotic gaze of the other characters / director / spectators (Still 5).

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Still 4: Yuddy dances narcissistically in front of the mirror. Simultaneously, he also becomes the object of gaze.

Still 5: Yuddy lies in bed in a seductive manner.

The consequence of lacking a meta-perspective to rein in the on-screen mobility (in terms of vantage point jumping from one episode to the next and from one character to another as if they are running in a relay on a circular track) leads individual protagonists to reinvent themselves, as

shown on-screen, one after another in a smooth flow. In addition, everyone needs to take care only of themselves *alone*, attesting to Derrida's idea that without the 'centre', everything / everyone is now the focus.[64] However, the downside would be that even when 'the characters are not happy with their solitude',[65] their brief encounters cannot eliminate their loneliness because they remain narcissistic and lonely throughout the film.

Aligning with Wong's directorial intent to reflect Hong Kongers' mentality during the Handover transition, this structuring in *Days of Being Wild* then works well in representing Hong Kongers' 'various feelings about staying in or leaving Hong Kong'.[66] In 'How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation', Bhabha argues that the liminality of migrant experience:

> […] is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life. […] The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation […] towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference.[67]

I believe that the main point here is the 'splitting' and 'hybridity', which goes beyond the past and present to address the unknown future – quite a valid point in delineating these 1960s characters of *Days of Being Wild* as stand-ins for the 1990s Hong Kong emigrants. It may also express Wong's opinion that the socio-political ambience serves as some loose references only, for the decisions still rest with the people who were not 'impelled' to move by anyone else but themselves if they chose to do so. Whether they wanted to fly like a legless bird (a story that Yuddy always cites) or to land in any particular locality was their own choice.

Hence, contrary to Abbas' opinion on the inhibition of such episodic structure, I have based on Tsui's insights into the protagonists' narcissistic outlooks to argue for the liberalness of this kind of narrative structure. With such an episodic storytelling technique, Wong thus ensures his protagonists (and indirectly, audiences) a continuous flow of opportunities to capitalize on their individualities, instead of allowing their thoughts and sentiments to fasten to a remote, imagined origin such as 'homeland'. In this way, Wong shows how they determine their own fate.

3.2.1.2. Stylized Camerawork and Others

Apart from the narrative structure and change in perspective signifying the filmic mobility in *Days of Being Wild* and conveying Wong's view on both the 1960s and the 1990s, the director's polished camera movements and other visual elements also help to improve the flow. Tsui comments:

> In Wong's case particularly, form is the essence of his films – it is, in many ways, the narrative of his work (and yes, that includes his oft-maligned use of stop-action effects). It's not the case of style over substance; rather, it's style as substance.[68]

In the following, I will use the change between two episodes featuring Lizhen as the female lead to illustrate the effect of these formal elements on the film's total sense of flow.

3.2.1.2.1. Illustration

The formal elements that Wong employs to indicate the sequential change from Lizhen's doomed relationship with Yuddy, to her budding friendship with Tide, demonstrate the sense of flow in

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this film. The first sequence shows Lizhen appearing at Yuddy's place to request a resumption of their relationship after breaking up with Yuddy. Yuddy's perspective dominates this scene. The camera briefly introduces the onlooker's view of Tide who is on patrol (Still 6). Yuddy's subjectivity in this sequence quickly resumes and everyone, in his eyes (as represented by the camera perspective), is subordinate to his narcissistic self. For example, ex-girlfriend Lizhen occupies only a small portion of the frame when she is negotiating with Yuddy (Still 7) whereas new girlfriend Mimi becomes the new erotic object preoccupying his mind (Stills 8, 9).

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Still 6: Camera assumes Tide's eyes to look at the two ex-lovers.

Still 7: Subjectivity of Yuddy resumes quickly.

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Still 8: Extreme close-up of Mimi's alluring neck when she is peeping outside to see Yuddy and Lizhen in negotiation.

Still 9: Camera representing Yuddy's perspective looks at Mimi lying lustfully in bed.

Within seven minutes of running time, Wong registers Yuddy's view in motion with a moving camera and various camera distances, including long shots, medium long shots, medium shots, medium close-ups, and close-ups, all of which suggest Wong's exquisite shot system. As the director confirms, the film has:

[…] a rather slow tempo that corresponded with my [Wong's] idea of the sixties. I tried to divide the film into four movements. The first was very Bressonian, with lots of close-ups. The second had the look of a B movie, with very complicated camera movements and long takes. The third was filmed in deep focus. The fourth looked more like the second, with lots of mobility. The story moved equally from one character to the other, which made the different movements more visible.[69]

Wong's camera moves like a dancer and shows us the fluency comparable to such works as *Szegénylegények / The Round-up* (Miklós Jancsó, Hungary, 1966) and *Russkiy Kovcheg / Russian Ark* (Aleksandr Sokurov, Germany / Russia, 2002) that are famous for their smooth camera motions.

Thereafter comes Tide's episode and the visuals suggest the episode replacement. The new segment starts with a high-angled, extremely long shot of Tide continuing his patrol on that same night (similar to Still 10). Such extremely high-angled shots correspond with other extremely low camera angles found in this sequence (Still 11). Modifications also occur to the lighting (becoming darker), frame composition (characters sharing roughly the same frame portion instead of having anyone dominate the frame like that in the previous sequence), face portrayal (faces partially covered with hair and cap as in Still 12) and camera movement (noticeable Steadicam shots following the characters to walk around as in Still 13).

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Still 10: Extreme high camera angle.

Still 11: Extreme low camera angle.

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Still 12: Protagonists' faces are partially covered.

Still 13: Steadicam tails the protagonists when they take a walk together.

Non-diegetic, 1950s-style romantic Hawaiian guitar music also suggests the episode shift.[70] Abbas believes that these songs such as 'Always in My Heart' and 'Perfidia', predating the film's 1960 setting, may dissolve the 1960 ambience that the visuals try to locate.[71] Yet these visual and audio subtleties are not as explicit as Tide's monologue in suggesting the episode change when he confesses before the audiences his secret concern for Lizhen. His monologue allows us to peek behind his calm face and notice his emotions unrelated to the stories and feelings of others, thus giving Tide an individuality that this policeman-turned-sailor character seems to lack.[72]

Rather ironically, monochrome colour indicating the depressing mood is one of the few cinematic devices that remain constant throughout the film. Wong talks about the choice of such colour tone, which is rarely found in his visually expressive oeuvre usually characterized by bright colours. Wong says:

> *Days of Being Wild* was a reaction against my first film *As Tears Go By*, which was full of harsh light and neon. […] I wanted to do a 'monochrome' film [for *Days of Being Wild*], almost drained of colour. It's a film about different kinds of depression, and it needed to be very blank, very thin in texture.[73]

The changes of viewpoints and formal techniques between these two episodes thus paint vividly a bleak picture of the sense of mobility evoked during the symbolic journey throughout this film.

They also show the manner in which the characters reinvent their sense of being within their individually given space (that is, their own episode) when they are lost. We are later confronted with their disappointment: Yuddy plans to find his very origin – biological mother, but is rejected the second time when he arrives in the Philippines (the first time occurred when he was abandoned as a baby). Tide intends to work as a sailor but misses the ship after bumping into Yuddy in the Philippines. Mimi wants to find Yuddy in the Philippines but she misses him because he has already been killed. Seen in this light, the allegorical movements in *Days of Being Wild* are arguably more stimulating than its characters' disappointing physical journeys.

Filmic mobility (achieved through episodic narrative structure and formal devices) in *Days of Being Wild* then gives us another exemplar of symbolic journeying found in film. This is largely attributed to the interconnectedness of these filmic elements besides the main plot. Despite the fact that scholars such as Abbas opined rather negatively on such a narrative structure, I have argued that narrative structure and formal elements in this film work well together to achieve the smooth flow throughout the film. In contrast, Wong's 1997 film *Happy Together* (with its representations of physical journeys and symbolic journeying in a nested spiral manner) may express the director's positive thinking after years of adjustment. I will discuss them in the next section.

3.3. *Happy Together*: Journeying of the Voluntary Exiles

Cannes award-winner *Happy Together* was theatrically released in Hong Kong in the summer of 1997 prior to the official Handover. It was produced by Wong's Jet Tone Production and its Japanese and Korean filmmaking partners. Scripted by the director as his sixth feature, the film was inspired by Puig's novel *Buenos Aires Affair* and shot mainly in Argentina, a setting in a

faraway location that would excuse the director from thinking about the Handover. However, the director admits that even if he tried not to think about it, such thinking would come to him.[74] The prolonged shooting period of three months in Argentina elicited from Wong a sense of exile and homesickness for Hong Kong.[75] As Wong explains: 'At the end deep down in your heart, what you care about is the place that you live in'.[76]

Set between mid-1995 and early 1997, *Happy Together* depicts the extended Argentina trip of two gay lovers Fai (Tony Leung Chiu-wai) and Wing (Leslie Cheung) who have decided to journey from Hong Kong to Argentina in the hope of starting their deteriorating relationship afresh. Rather than mend their rapport, they break up twice in Argentina. Fai, tired of his self-exilic life there, hopes to return home to Hong Kong to reconcile with his estranged father over a sum of money that Fai has stolen from his former boss, who is a friend of his father's. In order to save up for the return journey, Fai takes up several odd jobs in Argentina, first as a receptionist at a Tango bar, then a kitchen helper in a Chinese restaurant, and finally an abattoir worker. Wing in the meantime continues his promiscuous life and prostitutes himself to the locals.

Meanwhile, Fai befriends Chang (CHANG Chen), who is his Taiwanese colleague at the Chinese restaurant and also a sojourner in Argentina. Fai and Chang later leave the place separately while Wing remains in Argentina.

On his way back to Hong Kong, Fai transits through Taiwan where he learns about the death of DENG Xiaoping (who passed away at age 92), the chief engineer of the 'one country, two systems' political framework for Hong Kong to rejoin China. The film ends with Fai taking a night train in Taipei, symbolically carrying him towards an unknown future.

Needless to say, *Happy Together* invites comments on its audacity to explore the subject matter of homosexuality, which is still a sensitive topic in contemporary Hong Kong cinema. There has only been a handful of gay-related Hong Kong films made for general release since the 1990s, for example, *Jilao Sishi / A Queer Story* (SHU Kei, Hong Kong, 1997), *Yue Kuai Le, Yue Duo Luo / Hold You Tight* (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1997), and *Lan Yu* (Stanley Kwan, China / Hong Kong, 2001). While these local productions are essentially the directors' public announcement of their sexual orientation, Wong as a straight filmmaker maintains that *Happy Together* can be a story between any two persons.[77] It just happens in this film that the relationship belongs to two men. Wong believes that there is no difference between homosexual and heterosexual love.[78] He states that his films always revolve around one main theme: Interpersonal communication.[79]

Others pinpoint the film's political allusion. In his monograph on *Happy Together*, Jeremy Tambling argues that 'allegory' is the key to contemplating this film.[80] Teo argues that this is Wong's 'most political movie to date – it is conditioned by the 1997 deadline, highlighting its spiritually debilitating effects on two Hong Kong men'.[81] Peggy CHIAO Hsiung-ping suggests that this film is a tale of three cities – Beijing, Taipei and Hong Kong.[82] In his article 'Filming Diaspora and Identity: Hong Kong and 1997', Lu thinks that the national identity issue of Hong Kongers is brought up early in this film. The sequence about the night market on Liaoning Street in Taipei 'further heightens the sense of displacement of ethnic Chinese across the Mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the various continents'.[83]

Wong is ambiguous about these interpretations. The director names the film *Happy Together* because he hopes that there will be a delightful union (though he does not say clearly between whom) after 1 July 1997 but he insists that the two male leads in this film are not symbols of any countries.[84] Insofar as Wong's original plan (of not thinking about the Handover but making a

film from his favourite Argentinian novel) is concerned, his apolitical claim is valid. Yet his extended Argentina shooting trip and his feeling of exile could have led him to change his view, as hinted by an alteration from the originally planned story of a love triangle among two men and a woman to the present tale between two gay men.[85] Arguably, then, his narrative structure may also have carried his personal sentiments during the shooting period. I will attempt to ponder below the seeming immobility in *Happy Together*'s plot development as another unconventional narrative structure, with which Wong experiments.

3.3.1. Narrating within the Spiral Labyrinth

Wong continued trying different narrative structures in different films after *Days of Being Wild*. *Happy Together* offers us a somewhat circular cycle of life during the characters' sojourn in Argentina through repetitions in its structuring, like that of a spiral labyrinth that does not allow people to pass through easily. Yet with a loose narrative end, the film is not as bleak as it seems to be. If we consider in terms of diagram 2 the symbolic narrative journeying through this film's structure, we may find that *Happy Together* indicates more than a time in people's self-reinvention process during which they can change their viewpoints to allow them to alter continuously their sense of being. More importantly, I would argue, their routes of self-readjustment may also shift if they are courageous enough to free themselves from the usual path of thinking.

3.3.1.1. Spiral Journeys: Twists and Turns

The plot development of *Happy Together* has many repetitions. They show mainly Fai's side of the story to record the mundane details in his relationship with Wing, including eating, sleeping,

cooking, tangoing, quarrels, and working. These repetitious details do not give much information for the audiences to understand the protagonists' mindsets. The plot seems to be bumpy and become immobile on one spot, by repeating itself at that particular spot. According to Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong who co-author a book on Wong's *Ashes of Time*, 'each of his [Wong's] films is in continual dialogue with his other works'.[86] Writing about Wong's preoccupation of 'memory', Chuck Stephens notes that Wong's characters would re-emerge in his different films:

> [Andy] Lau's *Days* beat cop clearly prefigures both *Chungking*'s #663 and #223 – each waiting beside telephones that never ring – just as he reconstructs the doomed, woman-beating gangster he played in the visually splendid if generically stunted *As Tears Go By* as a sensitive, upstanding soul.[87]

Wong confirms that all his works are like different episodes of one film.[88] It follows that *Happy Together*, in giving us the feeling of stagnancy, could be a direct opposite to *Days of Being Wild* which conveys a sense of flow. Hence, if the allegorical, narrative journey through the film of *Days of Being Wild* runs swiftly in a circular relay, that of *Happy Together* would be in a stumbling, spiral labyrinth.

However, it is because of those recurring facts of life and the sentiments that they stifle, once the plot of *Happy Together* reaches its finale that has a loose closure, there is a sudden feeling of relief no matter where the people go next. If *Days of Being Wild* is intended to represent a series of repressive views and sentiments about emigration from Hong Kong before 1997, *Happy Together* with its free end may at least attempt to bring a ray of light to the people involved, after all the suffocating fears and anxieties over the years. It might still be their choice whether or not to continue living in Hong Kong. Yet their choice would not be an escape from the tensions and

fears of the communist state (a reason for emigration that Skeldon puts forward), but a more thorough consideration of themselves with regard to their current place of residence and the opportunities that they could possibly gain by emigrating.

In order to appreciate the relief brought by the loose narrative end of *Happy Together*, let us first discuss below the obstacles during Fai's and Wing's stay in Argentina.

3.3.1.1.1. Stumbling Blocks: Psychological Block

The first obstacle while they are in Argentina is a psychological block – their inferiority complex that could possibly come from their social double-marginalization. As gay males, they are socially marginalized in Hong Kong. Sojourning in Argentina does not ease the problem and they continue their homosexual activities clandestinely in places such as public toilets and cinemas. However, they do not seem to be proud of these activities. For example, Fai in his voice-over confesses that he initially does not appreciate going to the public toilets to find casual sex partners because that will make him act like promiscuous Wing, but Fai admits doing so for convenience only. It is thus understood that their sexuality has pushed them to the edge of society, both in Hong Kong and Argentina.

Moreover, their lives in Argentina are comparable to that of self-exiles, and would give them a feeling of social marginalization in a foreign land. Hence, Teo regards *Happy Together* as a film about exile.[89] The protagonists have to live among the locals without much space of their own. In Fai's case, his private space may include his residence (a small room) and his work place (including the street corner when he is a tango bar receptionist, the kitchen at the Chinese

restaurant, and the abattoir). The lack of individual space triggers their hope to go elsewhere: To Iguazu Falls together, and to return to Hong Kong in Fai's case.

The wish of Fai and Wing to go elsewhere from downtown Argentina discloses the ambiguity in their status. According to Naficy, 'many exiles seem to turn to the structural authority and certainty that only nature seems capable of providing: timelessness, boundlessness, reliability, stability, and universality'.[90] My argument about Hong Kongers having situational, diasporic consciousness would further explain why Fai and Wing, as voluntary exiles from Hong Kong, do not just desire to go to Hong Kong but also long for the Falls where they have never been before. When yearning for the Falls, they act like non-diasporic people and do not set their mind on any place any more than they do on their possessive love for the other. The Falls could then be understood as an imagined paradise where they can actualize themselves as gay males when the society does not agree with their sexuality. The film abounding with the images of the Falls and the characters' attachment to it would help support my argument here. Seen in this light, Wong's intent for the Falls as 'sexual energy' is understandable, although scholars interpret the Falls differently, ranging from signifying an illusion and lost hope (by Teo), to completion, stasis and death (by Tambling).[91]

On the other hand, Fai also expresses his wish to return to Hong Kong to reconcile with his father. This is read by many academics as a political allusion to Hong Kong's political return to China, which I have discussed earlier in this chapter. We may, however, think of Fai's wish from the angle of a diasporic person from Hong Kong. The few up-side-down city images (without a location setting) of Hong Kong as indicators of his desire for 'home' in this film is then likely conceivable, as 'absence makes the heart grow fonder'. Yet it is doubtful whether the yearning for 'home' is purely his 'home' in Hong Kong or it also embraces a thought for the imagined,

idealized 'homeland' of 'China', as indicated by a special mention of the news of Deng's death in the film.

The social marginalization they experience as gay males and voluntary exiles thus prevents them from further developing themselves as long as they keep hovering round their ambiguous status. This psychological barrier gives rise to the second obstacle in their Argentina trip and I would read it as an emotional block.

3.3.1.1.2. Stumbling Blocks: Emotional Block

Movement along *Happy Together*'s spiral narrative structure is extremely difficult because there is also a heavy emotional burden. Emotions, swinging from hope, sadness, despair to anger, probably stem from their double-marginalization as gay exiles and their possessive love for each other. These emotions arguably cause part of the immobility of the film narrative. Yet the director does not let them explode. Instead, they implode symbolically inside Fai's room where they spend the longest time together.

Tambling argues for the significance of the room:

> It is a room that generates all forms of urban fears, from boredom to paranoia. It is dominated by the lamp and by a single bed, a sofa and a cupboard for keeping cigarettes. […] The appearance of the flat at this moment, almost as though it were another character responsible for many of the tensions between the lovers.[92]

Chow points out the nostalgic tendency in the relationship between the two male leads in *Happy Together*.[93] She contends that their inability to be together elicits from them 'a profound

nostalgia or homesickness'.[94] From this angle, we then see that the room is a small haven for the

two lovers before they separate. By using bright interior lighting, deep space composition with

saturated hues, the director modifies Fai's shabby room (Still 14) into an on-screen oil painting

that would possibly remind audiences of Vincent van Gogh's *The Bedroom* (1888).[95] Everything

that happens there, although stifled, becomes pleasing in Fai's eyes.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Due to copyright issues, this image is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 14: Fai's room.

Painting: Vincent van Gogh's *The Bedroom* (1888) (first version).

In addition to the room, Wong's skilful use of formal elements further registers their emotions.

Teo notices the contributions of William Chang (art director) and Christopher Doyle

(cinematographer). Teo comments:

> Like artists who willingly incorporate 'accidents' into their art, Doyle and Chang use ink blotches, smears
> and stains on mirrors and other props as evidence of spontaneity and as testaments to the process of making
> art.[96]

One scene illustrates the functions of formal elements in expressing the moods and emotions of

the characters. When Wing is beaten for stealing a watch from his clients, the shaky, handheld

camera tails Wing as he stumbles his way to look for Fai at his place. This scene is in black and

white, indicating the depressing mood as well as the past time.[97] When Fai opens the door for

Wing, the camera movement begins to slow down until the two lovers hold each other tightly without a word.

The hospital scene follows. Wing requests to make up with Fai. Still in black-and-white, this transitional scene is shot with rather static camera movement to contrast with the next scene inside the taxi (Still 15). Saturated colour gradually replacing the black-and-white colour externalizes Fai's happiness at this point, as Fai admits later in voice-over that the time Wing spends with him to recover from this injury is the happiest moment between them. This shift from black-and-white to colour between different sequences leads Tambling to call the colour changes the 'markers of violent swings in mood'.[98] With the help of visual elements, we would be able to notice the loaded emotions of these two men.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 15: Fai (right) and Wing (left) are inside the taxi on the way back to Fai's place from the hospital.

When the symbolic spiral journeying through this film is hindered by these psychological and emotional blocks, a loose end at the finale would certainly give the main characters (and audiences) a relief. Wong does so by using circular motifs to suggest a trajectory change and we will discuss it in the section below.

3.3.1.1.3. Spiral Journeys: Trajectory Change

Though entangled, the stifling spiral narrative of *Happy Together* tries to unleash on several occasions to allow the characters the chance of self-reinvention through changing their journey route. I would argue that the shift in the protagonists' trajectory is indicated by the appearance of some oval-shaped objects. As such, the use of these objects implies the director's positive outlook on life in 'displacement'.[99]

The first of these shapes exists in the opening sequence. Several fast-paced, claustrophobic, extreme close-ups magnifying the inside of the protagonists' British National (Overseas) passports represent that they have just entered Argentina (Still 16). The passports are stamped with the oval-shaped Argentine immigration mark on their arrival day on 12 May 1995. It thus indicates their first trajectory change from Hong Kong to Argentina (Still 17).

While in Argentina, they orient themselves by going on more journeys, for example, to the Falls. Their physical journey coinciding with their symbolic journeying alongside the narrative signifies their mobility. As discussed earlier, the Falls imply the opportunity of their reconciliation. Yet the abortive visit to the Falls brings them the first break-up in Argentina and their eventual separate lives. The Falls thus also suggest their second trajectory change (Still 18).

The later reunion of Fai and Wing, and their second parting involve further mobility in some new directions. It triggers Fai to leave Argentina and Wing completely, in order to go back home to Hong Kong. However, we are not shown his actual arrival in Hong Kong, since the film ends in Taipei when Fai is taking a night train running into the on-screen darkness. It would imply that he may or may not actually return to Hong Kong, especially when his friend and possible love

interest Chang may soon be in Taipei. In addition, Fai (who can be viewed as embodying Hong Kong Chinese diaspora) may not want to return to Hong Kong because Deng died right before the Handover. Deng's death may suggest that the 'one country, two systems' political framework may not be honoured. Hong Kong Chinese who are afraid of the possible totalitarianism of the communist state may choose to continue their lives abroad. Taipei in this regard could represent another Chinese geographical outpost that is still struggling to stay away from Chinese Communist influence. The Taipei night train running towards the dark (seen as an on-screen black hole) thus offers us a hint at infinities for Fai / Hong Kong Chinese diaspora to keep on re-analysing their disturbed sense of self before they can resettle it. In this regard, the on-screen black hole at the far end of the railroad would symbolize Fai's third trajectory change that marks uncertainty as well as hope (Still 19).[100]

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 16: Fai's passport.

Still 17: The Argentine stamp on Fai's passport indicates his first trajectory change.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 18: Helicopter view of Iguazu Falls signifies Fai's second trajectory change.

Still 19: Fai taking the night train in Taipei and running into darkness introduces his third trajectory change.

All of these oval shapes slant slightly at the same angle and look very similar, suggesting Wong's deliberate use of them as punctuations in this film.

Alongside the protagonists' physical journeys, we are thus shown their symbolic journeying through all these sluggish twists and turns in a nested spiral. This initially coincides with the ideas of scholars such as Teo and Tambling, who might find that the film has a negative tone. Nevertheless, the rigidity may prompt the protagonists (and indirectly, the Hong Kong Chinese diaspora whom they represent) to take another track when they are readjusting themselves to the surroundings in order to resume flexibility, when their identity is still in a 'becoming' state/stage.

3.4. Cinematic Journeys and Journeying: Summary

Song of the Exile, *Days of Being Wild*, and *Happy Together* narrate the stories of difficult human relationships through the protagonists' physical journeys and, more provocatively, their symbolic journeying in the films. They project imageries to assure us that mobility would help those who are stuck in their circumstances to change their perspectives in looking at the issues on hand, and hopefully to resolve them.

Flashbacks in *Song of the Exile* deepen our understanding of the past of Hueyin and her mother with respect to the 1970s present and the more recent present of Hueyin when she is recounting this story in voice-over. Without a definitely identified 'homeland', Hueyin's own subjectivity becomes the new frame of reference for her to make sense of this world. It may, however, obstruct her to think of other poses to resolve her problems. The circuitous, episodic narrative structure of *Days of Being Wild* could eliminate this trouble of meta-subjectivity when all the protagonists assume in relay the lead role of their own episodes. The drawback of this

individualistic attitude is that they lack strong connections that they long for, albeit fearfully, building with others. *Happy Together* shows us mainly Fai's side of the story in his suffocating relationship with Wing. The loose closure of the stifling, spiral narrative structure nonetheless symbolically sets him free in the end.

4. INSIGHTS INTO HONG KONGERS' IDENTITY QUEST DURING TRANSITION: ALTERABILITY

We have just discussed the cinematic journeys and journeying as represented in *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild*, and *Happy Together*. By exploring the theme of journey and journeying in their films, directors Hui and Wong capture a fact of lives that concerned Hong Kongers before the political reunification with China, namely whether Hong Kong was their real 'home' and whether it was still worth staying behind when they could not see the future clearly. I have discussed earlier that such worries came from Hong Kongers' intricate relationship with 'China' and their trouble in locating a fixed, imagined, idealized 'homeland'. This has resulted in their feeling of alienation for 'China' among other sentimentalities. Inclusively, I have identified it as Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness. Such awareness has directly led Hong Kongers' to develop a fragile sense of belonging to their place of residence in Hong Kong.

In this section, I will evaluate what these cinematic imageries of population outward movement from Hong Kong would mean to Hong Kongers' identity quest during transition and I will conclude that as long as Hong Kongers were adjusting their standpoints, their transitional self was likely to change incessantly.

Let us return to diagram 2 in the introduction to this chapter. If identity is a matter of 'becoming' in Hall's sense, it follows that when Hong Kongers were deciding to emigrate before 1997, they

had devised an additional 'safety valve' in their self-construction process. It is not so much to control their own destinies with the choices of staying away from trouble, as to replenish themselves with viewpoints to resolve their self dilemmas. Such a 'safety valve' would exist in the journeying period (as in diagram 2) during which myriad variables emerged to affect people's thinking and enabled them to continue re-defining and re-modifying their stances. The journeying of this group of ethnic Chinese living in Hong Kong may not only reflect the actual physical journeys that they would take. It may also embrace the decision-making process (with psychological and emotional aspects) that they had to go through when pondering their stay in or departure from Hong Kong. Although the additional factors emerging during the journeying period would create another kind of disturbance, I would tend to consider them as effectively empowering the people to liberate their visions.

Cinematic imageries of actual human mobility and symbolic travel, in this case, help us envisage some of these unpredictable elements in the journeying period. For example, *Song of the Exile* with its flashbacks evokes a forgotten past to which the protagonists were oblivious. *Days of Being Wild* disrupts the norm of the linear storytelling method with its episodes, thereby bringing us multiple experiences of different protagonists. *Happy Together*, with its compact, spiral structure and repetitions, allows us to enjoy the complete freedom of route choices when it finally arrives.

By inference, as long as the figurative journeying period persists with people's continuous self-readjustment in relation to the Handover transition, Hong Kongers' sense of being is likely to go into a state of deferring the ultimate signification of self, as in Derrida's 'différance', and thus arguably remain altering.

5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined one of the possible features of self-construction during transition – alterability – by referring to the specific case of Hong Kong in facing the impending Handover. Built on my argument that I established in Chapter 1 for the situational, diasporic consciousness of this group of Chinese, I realized that the emigration waves from Hong Kong in the 1990s indicated more than what mere figures told us about these émigrés' displacement. Human geographical mobility suggested how they came to terms with their changing identity by actively finding ways to resolve their difficulties when they did not have a fixed, imagined, idealized 'homeland' to crystallize their sense of affiliation.

I therefore aligned several concepts, including 'displacement', 'sojourn', 'exile', 'migration', 'nomadism', 'diaspora', and 'journey and journeying' to interpret such human mobility from Hong Kong. As most of these concepts are reliant on other contestable concepts such as 'home' and 'homeland' to make sense, I argued that 'journey and journeying', in suggesting changes of vantage points along the way of people' movement, would be more stimulating in helping us to contemplate the significance and implication of Hong Kongers' recent emigration.

Through closely examining three pre-Handover Hong Kong films, *Song of the Exile*, *Days of Being Wild* and *Happy Together* in terms of the thematic, and in particular, the narrative functions of physical journeys and allegorical journeying in film, I established how vantage points could be added to make a difference during Hong Kongers' identity construction process. This included Hui employing flashbacks in *Song of the Exile* to enrich the story texture and enhance our / the protagonists' understanding of the past and the present, and Wong using episodes in *Days of Being Wild* and spiral structure in *Happy Together* respectively to suggest

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individualistic perspectives and trajectory change for the travellers. I then came to the conclusion that so long as the symbolic journeying period, which might consist of Hong Kongers' actual journeys and their decision making process, continued to allow them to adopt more viewpoints and re-elaborate their positions, their identity would probably stay altering.

The next chapter will explore another nature of identity transformation in a transition – indeterminacy – through the relationship between film directors and their alter egos in film.

NOTES

[1] From 'Personal Quotes' section of Ang Lee's biography on www.imdb.com
<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000487/bio> [accessed 25 August 2007].
[2] According to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress concerning the implementation of the Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (adopted at the 19th Session of the Standing Committee of the 8th National People's Congress on 15 May 1996), Hong Kong residents of Chinese descent and born in Hong Kong or other parts of China are considered as Chinese nationals even though they hold or have held foreign passports.
Immigration Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government
<http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hktraveldoc_1_o16_12.htm> [accessed 25 August 2007].
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[4] 'What is Forced Migration?', *Forced Migration Online*, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford
<http://www.forcedmigration.org/whatisfm.htm> [accessed 25 August 2007].
[5] Ronald Skeldon, 'Reluctant Exiles or Bold Pioneers: An Introduction to Migration from Hong Kong', in *Reluctant Exiles?: Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese*, ed. by Ronald Skeldon (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1994), pp. 3-18 (p. 4).
[6] Ibid., p. 8.
[7] Ibid., pp. 10-12.
[8] Ibid., p. 17.
[9] John Durham Peters, 'Exile, Nomadism, and Diaspora: The Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon', in *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and The Politics of Place*, ed. by Hamid Naficy (New York: Routlege, 1999), pp. 17-41.
[10] Ibid., p. 20.
[11] Ibid., pp. 36, 21.
[12] Ibid., p. 39.
[13] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 14.
[14] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', pp. 279-280.
[15] Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 3.
[16] Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 139-170 (p. 145) (first publ. in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322).
[17] Cresswell and Dixon, 'Introduction: Engaging Film', p. 6.

[18] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 237.

[19] Cresswell and Dixon, 'Introduction: Engaging Film', p. 5.

[20] Laurel Smith, 'Chips off the Old Ice Block: *Nanook of the North* and the Relocation of Cultural Identity', in *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity*, ed. by Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), pp. 94-122 (p. 95); italics in original.

[21] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 222.

[22] Freda Freiberg, 'Border Crossings: Ann Hui's Cinema', *Senses of Cinema*, 22 (September-October 2002) <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/02/22/hui.html> [accessed 7 September 2005].

[23] Ann Hui, '*Song of the Exile*' (Interview conducted in June 1996), in *Xu Anhua Shuo Xu Anhua / Ann Hui on Ann Hui* (in Chinese), ed. by KWONG Po-wai (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Arts Development Council, 1998), pp. 41-47; Berry, 'Ann Hui', p. 431.

[24] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, pp. 33, 127.

[25] Ibid., p. 233.

[26] Chua Siew Keng, '*Song of the Exile*: The Politics of "Home"', *Jump Cut*, 42 (1998), 90-93.

[27] Ibid., p. 93.

[28] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 38.

[29] Patricia Brett Erens, 'Crossing Borders: Time, Memory, and the Construction of Identity in *Song of the Exile*', *Cinema Journal*, 39, No. 4 (Summer 2000), 43-59; Patricia Brett Erens, 'The Film Work of Ann Hui', in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 176-195 (p. 187).

[30] Hui, '*Song of the Exile*', p. 42.

[31] Berry, 'Ann Hui', p. 431.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] My translation; 'Ann Hui' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 289 (26 April 1990), 12-17.

[35] Hui, '*Song of the Exile*', p. 42.

[36] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 38.

[37] Rey Chow, 'A Souvenir of Love', in *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. by Esther C.M. Yau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 209-229.

[38] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 39; italics in original.

[39] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 233.

[40] Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 1-17 (p. 4).

[41] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 280.

[42] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 97.

[43] Jimmy Ngai, 'All About *Days of Being Wild*: A Dialogue with Wong Kar-wai' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 305 (6-19 December 1990), 38-39; Mary Jane Amato and J. Greenberg, 'Swimming in Winter: An Interview with Wong Kar-Wai', in *Kabinet*, 5 (Summer 2000) <http://www.kabinet.org/magazine/issue5/wkw1.html> [accessed 8 April 2006].

[44] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 50; Amato and Greenberg, 'Swimming in Winter'.

[45] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 50; Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 5; Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, pp. 32-33, 68; Wimal Dissanayake and Dorothy Wong, *Wong Kar-wai's Ashes of Time* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 12.

[46] Ngai, '*Days of Being Wild*', p. 38; Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 85.

[47] Hui, '*Song of the Exile*', p. 42; Tony Rayns, 'Poet of Time', in *Sight and Sound*, 5, No. 9 (September 1995), 12-16 (p. 13).

[48] Marchetti, *From Tian'anmen to Times Square*, p. 10.

[49] Rayns, 'Poet of Time', p. 14.

[50] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 85.

[51] Rayns, 'Poet of Time', pp. 12-16.

[52] Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli, 'Trapped in the Present: Time in the Films of Wong Kar-Wai', *Film Criticism*, 25, Issue 2 (Winter 2000), 2-20.

[53] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 33.

[54] Rayns, 'Poet of Time', p. 14.

[55] Amato and Greenberg, 'Swimming in Winter'.

[56] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, pp. 31-46.

[57] My translation; Ngai, '*Days of Being Wild*', p. 38.

[58] Curtis K. Tsui, 'Subjective Culture and History: The Ethnographic Cinema of Wong Kar-wai', *Asian Cinema*, 7, No. 2 (Winter 1995), 93-124 (p. 101).

[59] Ibid.

[60] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 51.

[61] Tsui, 'Subjective Culture and History', p. 102.

[62] 'Wong Kar-wai on "As Tears Go By"' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 241 (16 June 1988), 24. Translation of this quotation is provided by Teo (Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 24).

[63] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 101.

[64] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 280.

[65] Rayns, 'Poet of Time', p. 14.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Homi K. Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World: Postmodern Space, Postcolonial Times and the Trials of Cultural Translation', in Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 212-256 (p. 224).

[68] Tsui, 'Subjective Culture and History', p. 94.

[69] Michel Ciment, 'Entretien avec Wong Kar-wai', *Positif*, 410 (April 1995), 39-45 (p. 42). Translation of this quotation is provided by Brunette (Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 21).

[70] Brunette, *Wong Kar-wai*, pp. 27, 128.

[71] Abbas, *Politics of Disappearance*, p. 53.

[72] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 43

[73] Rayns, 'Poet of Time', p. 13.

[74] Richard James Havis, 'Wong Kar-wai: One Entrance Many Exits', *Cinemaya*, 38 (Autumn 1997), 15-16 (p. 15); Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', pp. 109, 112.

[75] From *She Shi Lin Du: Chun Guang Zha Xie / Buenos Aires Zero Degree: The Making of Happy Together* (KWAN Pun-leung and Amos LEE, Hong Kong, 1999); Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', pp. 107-109; Havis, 'Wong Kar-wai', p. 15.

[76] Havis, 'Wong Kar-wai', p. 16.

[77] Ibid.

[78] '*Happy Together*: Let's be Happy Together before 1997' (in Chinese), *City Entertainment*, 473 (29 May-11 June 1997), 40-50 (p. 42).

[79] Ibid., p. 44.

[80] Jeremy Tambling, *Wong Kar-wai's Happy Together* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 11.

[81] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 100.

[82] Peggy Chiao Hsiung-ping, '*Happy Together*: Hong Kong's Absence', trans. by Clara Shroff, *Cinemaya*, 38 (Autumn 1997), 17-21 (p. 18).

[83] Sheldon Lu, 'Filming Diaspora and Identity: Hong Kong and 1997', in *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity*, ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 273-288 (p. 280).

[84] '*Happy Together*: Let's be Happy Together before 1997', p. 42.

[85] *Buenos Aires Zero Degree*.

[86] Dissanayake and Wong, *Ashes of Time*, p. 42.

[87] Chuck Stephens, 'Time Pieces: Wong Kar-wai and the Persistence of Memory', *Film Comment*, 32, No. 1 (January – February 1996), 12-18 (p. 17).

[88] Ngai and Wong, 'A Dialogue', p. 98.

[89] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 98.

[90] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 156.

[91] '*Happy Together*: Let's be Happy Together before 1997', p. 44; Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 105; Tambling, *Happy Together*, p. 60.

[92] Tambling, *Happy Together*, p. 46.

[93] Rey Chow, 'Nostalgia of the New Wave: Structure in Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together*', *Camera Obscura*, 14, Issue 42 (September 1999), 31-48 (p. 37).

[94] Ibid.

[95] Vincent van Gogh, *The Bedroom* (1888), first version, oil on canvas, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

[96] Teo, *Wong Kar-wai*, p. 111.

[97] '*Happy Together*: Let's be Happy Together before 1997', p. 42.

[98] Tambling, *Happy Together*, p. 47.

[99] Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, p. 152.

[100] Sheldon H. Lu, *China, Transnational Visuality, Global Postmodernity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 115.

CHAPTER 3:

THE INDETERMINACY OF BEING

> My own body is going to reject that new organ [transplanted heart] because it doesn't belong to me. In other words, it's an intruder. Though it saves my life, it's sort of making my body ache everywhere because all my cells are fighting against it.
>
> – director Claire Denis on *L'Intrus / The Intruder* (France, 2004)[1]

1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

The Intruder, by the French director Claire Denis tells the story of an ageing loner, whose ill heart causes him to leave his enclave on the French-Swiss border to undergo an illegal transplant. The operation leaves an ugly, serpentine scar on his chest and gives him the opportunity to trot across the world to relive his life. This dreamily cinematic meditation, with an unconventional narrative structure consisting of present moments, memories and prophetic glances, contains few dialogues to give us definite clue as to who the 'intruder' in the title is. It could be the protagonist, the new heart, or someone/something else. As Denis says, the film is 'like a boat lost in the ocean drifting'.[2]

We might imagine an un-shown scene where the protagonist is receiving his new heart in the surgery room: His ailing heart is taken away while the new organ is not yet placed into the man's body. This is the time when the man is vulnerable, relying on machines to live. Likewise, when Hong Kongers had to readjust themselves to the new historical, social, and political context accompanying the sovereignty transfer, there might have been moments during the Handover transition when the people's crucial attributes, such as their cultural qualities and thinking that

define them as 'Chinese' people had already departed from the supposed norms. Yet Hong Kongers might not find their cultural specificities helpful in readjusting themselves to the new ambience. Like the ailing heart of the man in *The Intruder*, these cultural qualities of Hong Kongers might need changes to assist them to make better sense of themselves and the surroundings. However, it also means that anything could happen to their self-reinvention so long as their 'Chineseness' is modifying during such a transitional state/stage, which could be termed as a state/stage of indeterminacy, and the consequential self could be turned around in unexpected ways.

Rendering this idea in terms of Hall's notion on 'identity as a matter of "becoming"' (see diagram 1.4.), I propose to add that identity could also be a matter of 'indeterminacy' somewhere in the middle of its 'becoming'. The process is shown in the diagram below.

Diagram 3:
Indeterminacy of Hong Kongers' Sense of Being during Transition

Hong Kongers' unsettled sense of self was further disturbed in facing the 1997 Handover.

becoming   indeterminate   becoming

Hong Kongers' re-settled sense of self?

indeterminate

indeterminate

Hong Kongers' identity was a matter of 'being' at the same time.
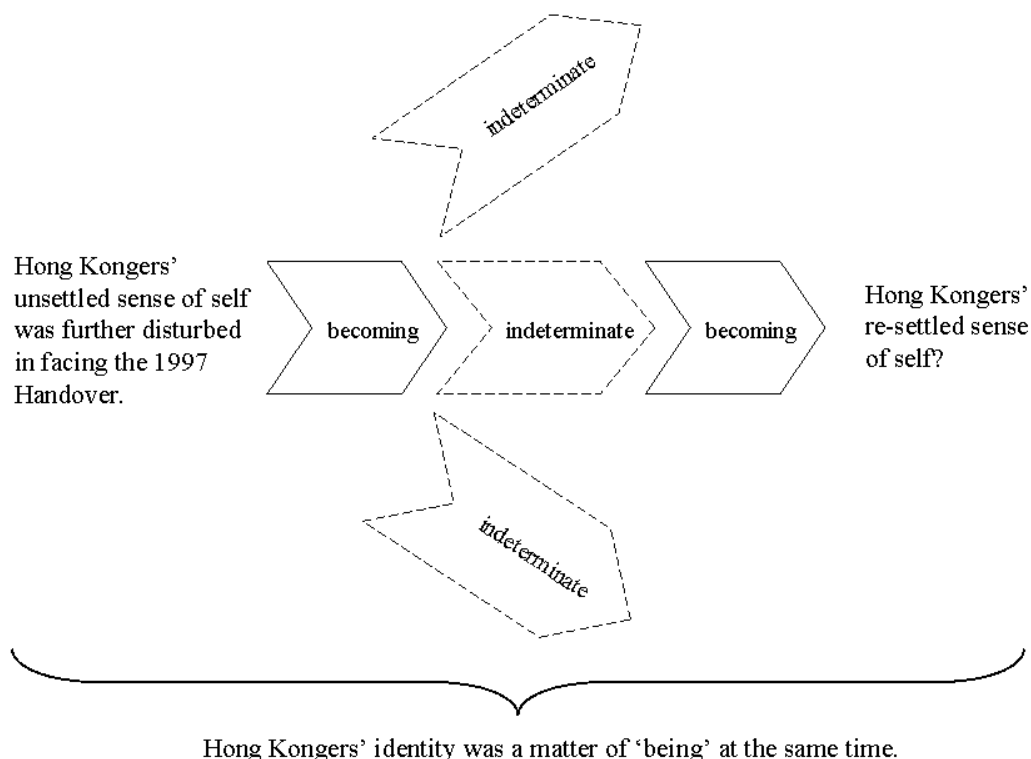
This chapter will thus deal with this liminal state/stage of indeterminacy of Hong Kongers' self-construction and investigate, through filmic rendition, how their 'Chineseness' exerts its influence during the course of the identity transformation process. I will propose to view the indeterminacy as a state/stage allowing this group of ethnic Chinese residing in Hong Kong to choose the best direction of advancing themselves before their next stage of life.

The discussion, informed by the ideas of Derrida (see diagrams 1.1, 1.2. and 1.5.) and the diasporic experiences of Ang and Chow, will begin with the transformation of 'Chineseness'. I will study how 'Chineseness' as a signifier could illuminate our understanding of the ways in which Hong Kongers deal with two 'foreign' groups of ethnic Chinese – Vietnamese refugees and illegal visitors from China. Bhabha's opinion on 'foreignness', and Hall's idea on 'sameness' and 'difference' will further inspire my investigation.

Two Hong Kong films, Hui's *Boat People* (1982) made before the Handover and Chan's *Durian Durian* (2000) produced in the de-colonized period, share the mutual subject of these trespassers in Hong Kong and therefore offer the cinematic representation to support my case. Whilst *Boat People* is about a group of Chinese-Vietnamese before they fleet Vietnam, *Durian Durian* delineates the illegal existence of two Mainland Chinese women when they are already in Hong Kong. Yet unlike many of their contemporaries who tend to ignore these external *Others* to Hong Kong society or stereotype them in films, both directors opt to take a humanist stance to reveal their stories and give them the flesh and blood on-screen. Meanwhile, the way in which the protagonists act as the directors' alter egos, and their characterization inscribed with the directors' worldview about being Chinese nowadays, allow the characters to be comparable to those alienated protagonists often found in 'accented' films. I will attempt to locate in these two films the visual expressions of the state/stage of indeterminacy of Hong Kongers' self and

propose that such a state/stage is helpful for those who need to undergo transitional changes to make the best choice of direction before the next stage of life comes.

2. 'CHINESENESS' AND TRANSFORMATIONS

In this section, I will reiterate the argument on 'Chineseness' I built in section 2.2., Chapter 1. It was argued that such a cultural signifier should be dealt with flexibly and that what Hong Kongers possess is a transformed version of their Chinese traits different from that of the other Chinese communities. I will build on this conclusion to explore further how far Hong Kongers' converted 'Chineseness' impacts upon their self-development during (and/or may continue after) the Handover transition. The sub-section on transformed 'Chineseness' in liminality will follow to show that the modified Chinese qualities are important yet circumstantial in affecting the self-reinvention of Hong Kongers during that period. The introduction of 'foreign' elements into the context enlighten people's self-knowledge. I will foreground two scenarios, one on Vietnamese refugees and another on illegal visitors from China, before I turn to talk about the state/stage of indeterminacy in the transitional identity, as articulated in different films, later on in this chapter.

2.1. 'Chineseness': Reflections on Open Significations

I will first recapitulate my argument on Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' in section 2.2., Chapter 1. If the Handover prompted Hong Kongers to consider their problematic affiliation with 'China' due to historical and socio-political reasons, arguably then, the cultural properties that define them as Chinese people were placed under scrutiny. In the introduction to their anthology *The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity*, Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort write about our sense of national 'belonging' and its homogeneous effects. They remind us that,

[…] frequently homogeneity amounts to little more than official discourse, a thin veneer of a common identity covering up the coexistence of a multiplicity of cultures and, sometimes, identities too.[3]

National membership, in this sense, does not guarantee consensus in the cultural respect. As for the case of Hong Kong, it was evident that the Handover rejoining it politically with the superstructure of China had resulted in divisive public responses and anxieties. One of the reasons was that Hong Kong's colonial experience and international exposure over the century prior to the Handover had led Hong Kongers to develop their uniqueness and made them different from Mainland Chinese and other overseas Chinese communities as far as their cultural traits were concerned. They developed different versions of Chinese qualities as a consequence.

In advocating 'Chineseness' as an open signifier, Ang foregrounds that how people deal with one's 'Chineseness' remains a personal choice. Hence, the state of uncertainty in Hong Kongers' sense of self that has arisen from their modified Chinese qualities may mean that, firstly, their self re-configurations for adjusting to the new contexts would be unpredictable and circumstantial; and secondly, the changes might not necessarily synchronize with the official Handover period. While some might re-orient themselves quickly to wait for the advent of the Handover, others might allow their Chinese cultural characteristics to continue transforming and influencing their self into the 2000s in view of the new historical, social, cultural, economic, and political setup of the place. By inference, their state/stage of indeterminacy of being (diagram 3) could endure for a long period before their selfhood enter into the next stage of development.

As 'Chineseness' is not and should not be treated as a fixed concept to avoid confining our vision, what would happen during the liminal state/stage of Hong Kongers' self re-configurations, as conditioned by their transformed 'Chineseness', is a thought-provoking topic.

2.2. Transformed 'Chineseness' in Liminality

A concern about the modified Chinese cultural characteristics is how far it could go in influencing Hong Kongers' self-reinvention during the Handover transition, given Hong Kong's ambiguous situations between historical eras, as well as between socio-cultural localism and economic globalization. With the continuous mutation of the context, I would suggest the impact of converted Chinese traits on Hong Kongers' identity evolvement is significant yet circumstantial.

Derrida argues that when the 'centre' is missing from the field, such a field will subsequently be that of the supplementations and substitutions of the 'sign', which in principle will operate freely within and astride the supposed boundary of the field because its 'totalization' is no longer meaningful. Similarly, if we consider 'Chineseness' as the signification system in which Chinese people are to be defined, there could be countless substitutions and supplementations of the 'sign' (or, local specificities and international involvement in Hong Kong's case) when a fixed, preferred, central reference such as ethnic bonding does not exist. Chow cautions people against the danger of upholding one's consanguinity ideal precisely because it is a myth and, according to Chow, such a myth is empty.[4]

Yet the 'sign' also has its intrinsic ambivalence. Derrida argues:

The concept of the sign […] has been determined by […] opposition throughout the totality of its history. It has lived only on this opposition and its system. But we cannot do without the concept of the sign, for we cannot give up this metaphysical complicity without also giving up the critique we are directing against this complicity, or without the risk of erasing difference in the self-identity of a signified reducing its signifier into itself or, amounting to the same thing, simply expelling its signifier outside itself.[5]

In other words, the 'sign' is *still* irreplaceable even when it is no longer the signifier that is opposite to the signified now missing. It will continue to undertake the signifying role, although it may be carried out on other levels or in other dimensions. Applying this idea to Hong Kongers' case, we may see that their 'Chineseness' has been transformed, and will continue to change and be signified by Hong Kong's local specificities and global involvement, which have also kept changing throughout the past century. In turn, Hong Kongers' Chinese characteristics will significantly affect their self-reinvention as long as the contexts go on mutating. In this regard, the transformation of Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' is also circumstantial.

2.2.1. Transformed 'Chineseness' vis-à-vis Foreignness

In writing about cultural translation in a cultural globality context, Bhabha states:

Unlike Derrida and de Man, I am less interested in the metonymic fragmentation of the 'original'. I am more engaged with the 'foreign' element that reveals the interstitial; insists in the textile superfluity of folds and wrinkles; and becomes the 'unstable element of linkage', the indeterminate temporality of the in-between, that has to be engaged in creating the conditions through which 'newness comes into the world'. The foreign element 'destroys the original's structures of reference and sense communication as well not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are 'preserved in the work of history and *at the same time* cancelled'.[6]

The introduction of new elements into the environment would thus trigger a certain impact on Hong Kongers' self-awareness, especially when their 'Chineseness' is challenged. During the course of the sovereignty conversion period, one of these foreign elements that revealed Hong Kong's interstitiality and ambiguous situations in between nations and cultures was its participation in accommodating Vietnamese refugees between 1975 and 1998. The other element was the influx of illegal child immigrants and Mainland prostitutes at the turn of the twenty-first century.

2.2.1.1. Hong Kong Chinese vs. Vietnamese

Upon the liberation of communist Vietnam in 1975 and the Sino-Vietnamese border conflict in 1979, the infamous population cleansing of ethnic Chinese in major cities in Vietnam was carried out, forcing thousands of them to flee the country on large, overcrowded, poorly equipped, crude boats. Many of them fled to Hong Kong and other neighbouring regions such as Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia to seek refuge.[7]

In 1979, Hong Kong declared itself as the 'First Port of Refuge'. News spread and thereafter hundreds of Vietnamese refugees fleeing communist Vietnam arrived in Hong Kong daily to wait for the visas to go to their destination countries in the West. It was estimated that more than 210,000 Vietnamese had reached Hong Kong since the first boat arrived in 1975, causing Hong Kong to have one of the highest boat people populations in the region.[8] About 143,700 of these Vietnamese refugees were later resettled in other countries while 67,000 of them were repatriated.

During the course of more than twenty years, when Hong Kong was sheltering these Vietnamese refugees, there were many local and international tensions and controversies as a consequence of the way Hong Kong was involved. Internationally, Hong Kong was severely criticized by independent organizations, such as the British Refugee Council, for the closed camp policy and the subsequent confinement of those freedom-seeking refugees 'behind barbed wire' in isolated detention camps, as well as the repatriation policy in the 1990s.[9] On the other hand, the issue of Vietnamese boat people has caused friction between the UK and China, when the latter accused the former of leaving behind troubles in Hong Kong before the colonizer was leaving.[10] Moreover, it had costed Hong Kong a huge sum to feed and house the refugees, putting much pressure on local taxpayers as a result. As in 1998, Hong Kong asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to repay a debt of about HK$1.61 billion for supporting Vietnamese refugees over the years, but UNHCR paid only HK$3.9 million and asked the outstanding balance to be treated as bad debt.[11]

On the local level as reported in the mass media, there were mixed feelings among the locals towards these refugees. For example, a news report in 1975 said that some locals felt a kind of affiliation and had sympathy with these refugees, as these locals had undergone a similar escape from Chinese communist rule years earlier.[12] Another news report in 1989, however, told about the anger of the locals towards the first asylum policy for Vietnamese refugees and the government's failure to consult the residents in the neighbourhood before building detention camps nearby for Vietnamese.[13] Meanwhile, it was found that many of these refugees had left Vietnam for economic rather than political reasons.[14] Vietnamese refugees were reported as dissatisfied with the living condition in the camps.[15] Yet their reactions to the repatriation policy of Hong Kong were depicted as negative and violent in news reports, after their desired Western countries had refused to take them and agreements were also made with the Vietnamese

government that no retribution would be used against these returned civilians.[16] The issue of Vietnamese refugees thus remains as one of the biggest historic, social, economic and political occurrences in Hong Kong's recent history.

If the influx of Vietnamese refugees (many of whom were ethnic Chinese) had created anxieties among Hong Kongers and triggered them to look into their relations with this group of incoming, overseas, exilic Chinese, those Chinese from the Mainland staying illegally in Hong Kong might have caused another kind of perplexity to Hong Kongers.

2.2.1.2. Hong Kong Chinese vs. Mainland Chinese

I briefly discussed in Chapter 1 that since the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the border between Hong Kong and China was closed. Travel between the two places was restricted. Residents from both sides of the border were required to have authorized permit to go over to the other side. Although Hong Kong has now returned to the Chinese governance, this immigration policy has not changed.

Closely connected to such immigration policy was the issue of Mainlanders' right of abode in Hong Kong, which has become one of the hottest socio-political debates in recent years. Many Hong Kong (usually male) immigrants have chosen to return to the Mainland to get married there. Afterwards they would go back to Hong Kong to make a living and often leave behind their young children with their Mainland wives who do not have the right of abode in Hong Kong. These young children may have to wait for a long time to receive the permissions from both Chinese and Hong Kong governments for resettling in Hong Kong to reunite with their

families.[17] Many parents could not wait but chose to smuggle their children illegally from the Mainland down south to Hong Kong.[18]

Meanwhile, the authorities in Hong Kong also took action to express their intolerance for these illegal immigrations. About 1,400 of these illegal child immigrants were deported from Hong Kong between January and July in 1997, right before the official Handover, as compared to fewer than 100 in the previous year.[19] In the meantime, since 1997, there have been right-of-abode seeking campaigns persistently going on in Hong Kong to accompany the legal lawsuits fighting for such a right. In January 2002, the court case of the right-seekers (mostly children) was finally lost according to the final appeal court ruling.[20]

Even when Mainland women chose to give birth in Hong Kong, the non-resident mothers would have to go back to the Mainland, leaving the babies behind with their Hong Kong husbands. Statistics show that 'there are a total of 2,202 known cases of children born in Hong Kong to Mainland mothers who were non-permanent Hong Kong residents since July 1, 1997. Among these mothers, 232 are illegal immigrants and 1,821 are overstayers',[21] according to a news report on 21 July 2001.

As a result of these socio-political and legal matters, even if the illegal child immigrants are already in Hong Kong, they cannot live their normal lives as other local children of the same age do. They cannot go to school in Hong Kong and have to hide away at home to avoid being deported and separated from their families.

In addition to illegal Mainland child immigrants, Mainlander prostitution in Hong Kong has also put considerable socio-economic strain on Hong Kong. Prostitution thus far is legal in Hong

Kong but connected activities such as triad societies and soliciting are illegal. Mainly organized by the triad society members in Hong Kong, Mainland female prostitutes go to Hong Kong on legal, short-term travel visas of three months but often violate their terms of stay to work illegally there. While some are voluntarily involved in the sex trade, many others are tricked or forced into prostitution.[22] As their business is usually heavily controlled by local triad societies, their existence has caused inconvenience and worries in the neighbourhoods where Mainland prostitution is highly active.[23]

In a letter written to a local newspaper, Hong Kong's former Secretary for Security, Regina Ip, discloses some alarming figures regarding Mainland prostitution in Hong Kong:

> Between 1999 and 2000 the number of mainland prostitutes arrested more than doubled. The 3,000-odd mainland prostitutes apprehended in 2000 represented 88 per cent of all prostitutes from other places arrested in Hong Kong.[24]

The Hong Kong police force has undertaken sizable operations trying to eradicate the problem but it remains unresolved.

Consequently, Hong Kong society has been under the influences of these two types of Mainlanders temporarily residing in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, from a cultural point of view as suggested by Bhabha at the beginning of the previous sub-section (2.2.1.), the co-existence of these people with Hong Kongers would provide material for Hong Kongers, as well as for us in a more general sense, to contemplate our sense of being in a transnational and transcultural world where everything is undergoing lots of negotiation, compromise and transformation.

2.2.1.3. Sameness vs. Difference

In writing about cultural identity, Hall tells us his Jamaican experience:

> As a Jamaican returning for the First Caribbean Film Festival, I 'recognized' Martinique instantly, though I was seeing it for the first time. I also saw at once how different Martinique is from, say, Jamaica. […] And the difference *matters*. It positions Martiniquains and Jamaicans as *both* the same *and* different.[25]

This 'same' and 'different' experience can be applicable to Chinese people from different communities if we change the setting from the Caribbean to the East Asian region. For example, Hong Kong Chinese are in principle the *same* as Chinese-Vietnamese or Mainland Chinese; yet they are also *different*. It is through such 'sameness' and 'difference' that people from different places can re-evaluate their own uniqueness and, in so doing, also appreciate the value of one another.

The matter of 'sameness' and 'difference' between different groups of Chinese, when portrayed in films, reveals the ambiguity of 'Chineseness' and its possible effects on Hong Kongers' ongoing identity formation. It is conspicuous in the characters in Hong Kong films made over the two decades of the Handover transition. Broadly ranging, this continuum has, at one end, the *absence* of Hong Kong Chinese roles. For example, in *Boat People* (1982), a Hong Kong actor plays a Japanese character who speaks Cantonese with the supposed Vietnamese roles. At the other end of the continuum, there is the ghastly omnipresence of 'Chineseness' besieging the Mainland Chinese protagonists in *Durian Durian* (2000). The film illustrates how they are knowingly obsessed with their 'home' in China while leading illegal lives in Hong Kong. Yet the ghost of the protagonists' Chinese roots does not only reinforce their marginalization in Hong

Kong, which has a different legal system, unfamiliar culture and lifestyle, it also allows Hong Kongers to rediscover themselves. However, while Hong Kongers were rethinking their own stance, triggered by the adjustment of 'Chineseness', they were likely to enter a state/stage of indeterminacy during their self-rediscovery. In the next section, I will turn to discuss these two films with regard to the respective relationships between the directors and their alter egos, and I will attempt to trace the cinematic representation and the importance of such state/stage of indeterminacy before people's next stage of life arrives. My discussion will demonstrate that such state/stage may turn out to be where people can have a chance to choose the most feasible direction for continuously developing their individualities.

3. CINEMATIC ARTICULATION OF 'CHINESENESS': *BOAT PEOPLE* AND *DURIAN DURIAN*

Stereotyping is a convenient way of portraying cinematically certain groups of characters that both the directors and the audiences are not familiar with in real life. In representing Vietnamese in contemporary Hong Kong films, for example, Vietnamese characters are usually portrayed as villains or placed in supporting roles, while Vietnam itself is a dilapidated setting. *Ying Xiong Ben Se III Xi Yang Zhi Ge / A Better Tomorrow III: Love and Death in Saigon* (TSUI Hark, Hong Kong, 1989) and *Die Xue Jie Tou / Bullet in the Head* (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1990) are set in Vietnam but feature Hong Kong protagonists. *Fushi Lianchu / To Liv(e)* (Evans Chan, Hong Kong, 1991) has a story that revolves around the matter of Vietnamese refugees. Yet we can only hear a rather one-sided story from Hong Kongers' viewpoint. In *Wu Shu / Run and Kill* (Hin Sing 'Billy' Tang, Hong Kong, 1993), the Vietnamese is a character who tries to save the male lead but is later killed. In the action-comedy series *Du Shen / God of Gamblers* (Jing Wong, Hong Kong, 1989-1991, 1994), the Vietnamese is the faithful bodyguard to the protagonist.

In the USA, Vietnamese are seen mainly in Vietnam War-related films, such as *The Deer Hunter* (Michael Cimino, USA, 1978), *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979), *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, USA, 1986), and *Good Morning, Vietnam* (Barry Levinson, USA, 1987). The Vietnamese remain in the background or are homogenized. Vietnam was feminized in *Heaven & Earth* (Oliver Stone, France / USA, 1993) in which the life of the female lead (a Vietnamese woman) reflects this country's hardship and torture during and after the Vietnam War. Recent works such as *The Beautiful Country* (Hans Petter Moland, Norway / USA, 2004) gives a nuanced portrayal of the Vietnamese male lead in a post-Vietnam War setting, though this film stereotypes the female lead (a Mainland Chinese female) as a prostitute, who hopes to emigrate elsewhere from China.

There are two main kinds of stereotypes of Mainland Chinese characters in films made outside China. While females are reduced to prostitutes or the equivalent as in *Tian Yu / Xiu Xiu: The Sent-down Girl* (Joan Chen, Hong Kong / Taiwan / USA, 1998), males are gangsters or criminals, as in *Shenggang Qibing / Long Arm of the Law* (Johnny Mak, Hong Kong, 1984).

In this regard, *Boat People* and *Durian Durian* are two extraordinary cases that not only pay close attention to the uniqueness of the Vietnamese / Mainland Chinese characters, but the directors also take up the characters' perspectives and virtually turn them into the directors' alter egos. Whereas Hui's alter ego in *Boat People* could be found in the Japanese character, Akutagawa (and later the Vietnamese girl Cam), Chan's alter ego in *Durian Durian* is arguably the illegal child immigrant, Fan. According to Naficy, the diegetic alter ego is one of the devices that 'accented' filmmakers deploy to mark their diasporic/exilic subjectivity.[26] Borrowing Naficy's idea, I propose the Vietnamese and Mainland Chinese characters in *Boat People* and *Durian Durian* respectively also provide sites for the directors (and indirectly, their Hong Kong

audiences) to re-evaluate their own Chinese cultural qualities. I will conclude my analyses on both films below by locating a visual state/stage of indeterminacy corresponding to such self-query.

3.1. *Boat People*: Foreigner as Alter Ego

Released in 1982, *Boat People* was Hui's fourth feature and first border-crossing project. It was initiated by the producer Miranda YANG, funded by a leftist Hong Kong-based company, Bluebird Movie, and shot on location in Hainan, China, which was to turn into the Vietnam setting of the film.[27] Shanghai-based scriptwriter CHIU Tai An-Ping (aka QIU Dai Anping) scripted the film while other cast and crew members included residents from Hong Kong and China. Cantonese dialect is mainly spoken in the film. As a commercial success grossing more than HK$15 million (equivalent to about £1 million) and ranking fourth in box-office income among ninety-nine Hong Kong films made in 1982, *Boat People* subsequently gained Hui the Best Director Award in the 2nd Hong Kong Film Awards in 1983 as well as international applause.[28]

Set in communist Vietnam mainly in 1978, *Boat People* narrates the tale of a Japanese photojournalist and several Chinese-Vietnamese, and gives the reasons why these Vietnamese decide to flee their country. The plot starts with Japanese photojournalist Akutagawa (George LAM), who covered the end of Vietnam War in the country in 1975 and is invited by the Vietnamese government to visit Da Nang in 1978. The photojournalist is shown the model life in the 'New Economic Zones'. Yet most of these zones are detention areas for political opponents and social rejects who are inhumanely treated.

Understanding that he is not able to know the true civilian life with an official escort, Akutagawa chooses to explore the place on his own. He meets a local teenage girl Cam Nuong (Season MA) and gradually befriends her and her fatherless family. Through them, Akutagawa learns about the destitute lives of the Vietnamese and gets himself involved with his local friends' affairs. For example, he takes care of Cam and her youngest brother after the premature deaths of Cam's mother and second brother. He acts as the liaison between Madam the bar owner (Cora MIAO) and To Minh (Andy Lau), a former translator for the American and a 'New Economic Zone' inmate, when To Minh is planning to flee. Communist official Nguyen (QI Mengshi) confides in Akutagawa his reminiscence of the French colonial lifestyle. With the exception of Nguyen, all of these Vietnamese characters have their reasons to leave the country. They seek help from Akutagawa as an outsider. Yet it eventually leads to Akutagawa's self-sacrifice to allow Cam and her youngest brother to board a refugee boat, in order to prevent the siblings from being sent away to the 'New Economic Zone'.

In fact, *Boat People* is not Hui's first production about the Vietnamese issue. Her two earlier projects have similar concerns. The first one is *Lai Ke / The Boy from Vietnam*, a 1978 television episode of the series *Shizi Shanxia / Below the Lion Rock* sponsored by Hong Kong Government-owned television station. The second one is *Hu Yue De Gushi / The Story of Woo Viet* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1981). It starts with the Vietnamese refugee protagonist arriving in Hong Kong and can be viewed reversely as the sequel of *Boat People*.[29] Local critic Shu Kei remarks that these three works not only share the same subject, their characters also inspire and echo one another in different narratives.[30]

Hui claims that she wants to portray the matter of living instead of political concerns in this film.[31] She claims to have strong affiliation with her contemporaries in Hong Kong.[32] Her films

evidently adopt this humanist standpoint and explore the lives of different local groups. For example, Hui's feature début *The Secret* (1979), is a psycho-thriller based on a double-murder in Hong Kong.[33] *Zhuang Dao Zheng / The Spooky Bunch* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1980) is about a Cantonese opera troupe haunted by ghosts.[34] *Ordinary Heroes* (1999) shows the human side of a group of neglected, social activists. Hui's concern for the people as portrayed in *Boat People* is thus consistent with that of her other works.[35]

Hui's timely attention in this film to the current affairs concerning Vietnamese boat people, however, has led to fierce controversy locally and internationally. Many reviews focus on its political allusion.

Internationally, it was natural for reviewers to interpret the film in line with the development of the Vietnamese refugees' issue, which had become an international relations matter (see section 2.2.1.1.). Erens says that 'critics at the New York International Film Festival objected to the rather one-sided representation of the Vietnam government and the film's lack of historical perspective'.[36] Julian Stringer notes that at the Cannes Film Festival in 1983, 'this Official Selection was protested by the Vietnamese government, and attacked on grounds of political naivety and opportunism as well as aesthetic superficiality and crude melodrama'.[37]

Locally, the film's release in Hong Kong right after the Handover announcement in 1982 and its subsequent box-office success led the authorities in Hong Kong and China (and much later many critics) to understand it as a political allegory that provoked audiences' anxieties about the Handover.[38]

Film and cultural critic LEUNG Ping-kwan reveals that *Boat People* was supported by a local leftist company 'in compliance with Chinese foreign policy at that time to condemn the Hanoi government', with which China was at war in 1979 over the border conflict.[39] This thus casts doubt on Hui's apolitical claim. Obviously, when the film turned out to be unexpectedly popular among its Hong Kong audiences who were believed to read this film as prophesying their future after 1997, the scenario embarrassed its production company and alarmed the Chinese government.[40] It eventually led to the film's being banned in both China and Hong Kong.[41] In 1992, it had another theatrical release in Hong Kong due to property rights transfer,[42] while the ban remains effective in China to this day. Taiwan also banned this film (and Hui's other films) because the film was shot in China.[43]

More recently, many critics still read the film as having some kind of political stance. For example, Marchetti sees the parallel between China and Vietnam in the film.[44] Local critic SEK Kei argues:

> Hongkong audience[s] at the time [...] were caught up in a drama which could be representative of their own conditions in the near future. *The Boat People* afforded Hongkong audiences an opportunity to get their anxieties and fears off their chest.[45]

Yet we might recall the commercial difficulties of the Hong Kong film industry. In that kind of business environment, intentionally making a political film would almost immediately kill the director's career due to commercial constraints and censorship consequences. As Hui claims that film means to her a 'living by proxy' and a livelihood, it is quite believable that she did not intend *Boat People* as politically driven.[46] Hence, I would suggest reading this film in terms of Hui's affiliation with the residents (Chinese and other groups) in Hong Kong. In the following, I

will discuss the way in which Hui expresses her humanist stance and her possible query about 'Chineseness' through her alter ego in this film.

3.1.1. Director's Alter Ego

Due to her diasporic background, it is understandable that Hui always struggles in between her transformed 'Chineseness' (which has incorporated local specificities from the places she once stayed in) and her sentiments of rootlessness. Identifying herself as a Hong Konger, Hui compares the feelings of rootlessness of Hong Kongers with that of the Vietnamese:

> Vietnamese refugee stories are somehow connected with what people in Hong Kong feel as well. We too have no real sense of belonging to any country in particular. Different political forces pull at our lives, but we have to control our destiny. No one is going to ask us what we want to happen to Hong Kong. So, in a way, *Boat People* is a dramatization of that.[47]

As such, Hui displays the liminal subjectivity that 'accented' filmmakers would usually have. Arguably, then, in telling the stories about the diasporic or exilic characters in her films, Hui also allows them to become her alter egos or at least share with her a similar understanding of this world.[48]

In *Boat People*, Hui's alter ego could be found in Akutagawa. I would argue that the changeability of 'Chineseness', as embodied by this Japanese character (which eventually leads to a state/stage of indeterminacy of being (as in diagram 3) shown on-screen), could be found through problematizing the role of alter ego.

I speculate that there are at least two reasons for Hui to deploy a Japanese rather than a Chinese character as the lead to possibly materialize her worldview.[49] Firstly, it would be helpful in reflecting the international atmosphere, as this film is meant to have the international affairs of the late 1970s as the backdrop. At around that time, the relations between China and Vietnam were sour. The film would not be convincing if it was about Vietnam inviting a photojournalist from China to cover their new lives, not to mention that China just ceased the infamous Cultural Revolution in 1976. Secondly, if Hui needs a character in the film to project her second self, a photojournalist from the West may be a possible choice; yet it may not help much in personifying herself: Indeed, a Japanese rather than a Chinese may serve the purposes better because Hui is of half-Chinese, half-Japanese descent.

Moreover, by employing such an ambiguous figure, Akutagawa, as her alter ego, Hui offers Hong Kong audiences the opportunity to see and feel what she herself sees and feels. Hence, we may speculate that Akutagawa serves not only as Hui's alter ego but also her target audiences' (primarily Hong Kongers) on-screen self. This becomes evident when Akutagawa speaks Cantonese most of the time, thereby eliminating the language barrier between the Hong Kong audiences and this Japanese character, while enhancing their affinity. Akutagawa thus embodies Bhabha's idea on 'foreignness', in that this character not only carries with him traits alien to the other characters / the audiences, but he is also successful in negotiating his presence and acceptance among them.[50] What is supposed to be a foreigner's role then turns easily into a site of identification as a 'hybrid' Chinese for the Hong Kong audiences.

Nevertheless, the choice of a Japanese character is risky, as the relations between China and Japan have been hostile for decades. Due to their situational, diasporic consciousness, Hong Kong Chinese may sometimes choose to associate themselves with the Chinese population at

large and stand on the Chinese side in such international conflicts as the Japanese invasion of China and the more recent conflict between China and Japan over the controlling rights of the Diaoyutai Islands. The role of Akutagawa in this film immediately provides ground for the audiences to confront their disturbed sense of self. Hui states that she cast George Lam, one of the most popular singers/actors at that time in Hong Kong to play this role, for the purpose of adding attraction in the film.[51] Nevertheless, I would consider that the extra advantage of casting Lam would be to eliminate the sense of hostility towards a Japanese character and the role's ambiguity, while further enhancing local audiences' sense of kinship with him when the film was released in Hong Kong.

We will discuss below the formation of the relationship between the director, the alter ego, and the audiences with illustration.

3.1.1.1. The Triangle: Director – Protagonist – Audiences

The opening scene demonstrates how the intricate relationship between Hui, the audiences and their alter ego could be built. It would facilitate the director to encourage the audiences to understand this refugee story from the Vietnamese perspective later on, as well as lead the audiences to re-evaluate their own 'Chineseness'.

The film opens with a long take, crane shot of about two-and-a-half minutes featuring the communist Vietnamese army parading through the town after the civil war. The documentary-like frame is packed with civilians and soldiers. Akutagawa soon takes the centre stage. He is shown taking pictures of the marching army while Hui's camera on the crane follows him from a distance for the rest of this opening (Stills 20 – 22).

Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

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Still 20: Akutagawa is taking pictures.

Still 21: He is walking downstream in a direction opposite to the marching army.

Still 22: He is surrounded by onlookers.

Stringer argues for the importance of this sequence:

> We see Akutagawa taking snapshots of tanks as they roll down the street and crowds of onlookers cheering military muscle as it parades in front of their eyes. What *Boat People* therefore presents, and explores, in this powerful opening scene is an official public spectacle.[52]

I agree with this comment as far as this scene *per se* is concerned. Nevertheless, if we consider the relationship between Hui, Akutagawa, and the audiences, this scene is not simply a 'public spectacle'. Hui powerfully captures the audiences' attention and allows them to observe Vietnamese life via her camera, then through Akutagawa's humanist camera. Audiences are thus invited to step into Akutagawa's shoes to see the world. If Akutagawa could serve as Hui's alter ego, he would also become the audiences' on-screen self. What and how Hui thinks, in principle, would pass on to the audiences via Akutagawa.

Meanwhile, the long shot shows that Akutagawa is walking downstream alongside the upward moving Vietnamese people, as seen on-screen, thus cinematically emphasizing his foreignness as if he is a lost boat drifting across the sea. Since *Boat People* has a poetic yet forceful Chinese

title, *Touben Nuhai*, literally meaning jumping into a tempestuous sea, this scene thus captures exquisitely such meaning. As Bhabha argues:

> The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'.[53]

By inference, this scene evokes the audiences' sense of rootlessness, as well as their question about their 'Chinese' status in coming face to face with another group of rootless Chinese living in Vietnam, who seem to be very close to and yet also remote from themselves.

Hence, whereas many scholars interpret this film as a trigger of Hong Kongers' 1997 anxiety because of its depiction of the Vietnamese sufferings later on in the film, I suggest that the first thing Hong Kongers might experience is an ignition of their sense of self-doubt and a self-query of what it means to be Chinese today.

This sequence thus helps build the relationship between the director, male lead and the audiences, and subsequently consolidates the audiences' empathy for the Vietnamese. It provides the foundation for the audiences to re-measure their self-worth. However, the link between the director, the audiences, and the male lead may also be easily upset when the audiences are invited to understand the Vietnamese story through Akutagawa's eyes / camera. We will discuss this below.

3.1.1.2. Problematics of the Second Self

Akutagawa is shown from the outset to have a strong bond with his Nikon camera, which serves not only as his tool, but also his identification as from the First World and definition of his role as alter ego. Such bond between the journalists and their tools is not usually found in films such as *The Killing Fields* (Roland Joffé, UK, 1984) and *Welcome to Sarajevo* (Michael Winterbottom, UK / USA, 1997) that tell stories of First World journalists covering news in the Third World or war-torn countries. These two examples highlight interpersonal bonds but not the bond between the journalists and their tools. It follows that when Akutagawa has to sell his camera for money to help the siblings flee the country, his function as the director's alter ego is shaken and his embodiment of transformed 'Chineseness' for Hui and the audiences becomes ambivalent, if not problematic. Moreover, the changeability of 'Chineseness' and its effect on the self, I would argue, are captured by the last freeze-frame shot.

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Still 23: The coffin of Cam's mother is closing.

Still 24: Akutagawa has dismantled the camera and is about to close the case.

I shall elaborate on my point with illustration. Two scenes crosscutting each other initially register the change in Akutagawa's function as alter ego. One of these is the funeral of Cam's mother. The other takes place in Akutagawa's dimly-lit hotel room when he is dismantling his

camera before selling it. By intercutting the closing of cases (coffin in Still 23 and camera case in Still 24), Hui subtly shows the change in Akutagawa. One the one hand, it may intensify his role as Hui/audiences' alter ego because he fully sheds his outsider status to migrate to the position of the siblings' carer. Through Akutagawa, Hui is able to further channel the audiences' sympathy for the Vietnamese refugees at large. Simultaneously, Akutagawa also confirms his feelings of rootlessness by giving up his identification – the camera, and helps aggravate such feelings among the audiences.

On the other hand, the absence of the camera also problematizes the concept of identity embodiment in Akutagawa, for Abbas says: 'If disappearance problematizes representation, it also problematizes self-representation'.[54] In losing part of his signifiers (the camera), Akutagawa's representation for transformed 'Chineseness' and rootlessness (for the director/audiences) is upset. This is comparable to the state/stage of indeterminacy during Hong Kongers' identity construction when the previous signifiers of Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' no longer work.

We may find that the film's finale, which portrays how Akutagawa sacrifices himself to help the siblings board the boat and flee, confirms the problematics of him as a possible second self for the director/audiences. A close-up of Cam's face (already on the boat), dissolving into Akutagawa (burnt alive at the pier in an extremely long shot after the policemen have shot him), externalizes on-screen the fatalistic thought of life and death, sacrifice and hope (Still 25). Almost like the myth of the burning phoenix that gives birth to new life among ashes, Cam somehow becomes Akutagawa's reincarnation and takes up his role as the possible alter ego. It culminates in the freeze frame capturing the moment when the siblings are looking ahead of their voyage/uncertainty in life on the boat deck (Still 26).

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Still 25: Cam's face (close-up) dissolves into Akutagawa (burnt alive at the pier, shown in extremely long shot).

Still 26: Final freeze-frame closes up on the siblings.

While Li suggests that one sees in this freeze frame the signal of hope for Hong Kongers amidst their 1997 anxiety,[55] Stringer compares this shot with the one that ends *Les Quatre Cents Coups / The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, France, 1959) but questions the capacity of this still image in *Boat People* in carrying the background story of the characters.[56]

As Hui maintains: 'Ending is not a conclusion, […] I would not interpret the film only from the ending. I would rather do it throughout the whole film'.[57] The relationship between this final shot and the sense of rootlessness, which Hui articulates throughout the film, merits some attention here. As discussed, Cam has now replaced Akutagawa to carry Hui's emotions. Her narrow escape suggests two levels of cinematic representations of the drifting 'Chineseness', triggered by the absence of the camera. Firstly, she continues such representation. By seeing her on-screen, the audiences would continue sensing the disturbance that has been passed on to them. Secondly, this shot is both a direct and indirect product of Akutagawa's camera – direct because if Akutagawa does not sell the camera, the siblings would not be able to flee; indirect because this shot is not taken with Akutagawa's camera. Hence, this still image works effectively in freezing that moment right after what he has represented for transformed 'Chineseness' and

rootlessness is disturbed and counteracted. Through this freeze-frame, we are able to see a perpetual state/stage of indeterminacy in the ongoing identity articulation of Hong Kongers, as represented by the oscillation between representation and un-representation due to the absence of the camera.

Therefore, instead of reading this film politically and interpreting the last freeze-frame shot as representing hope amidst 1997 anxiety (in Li's opinion) or being cautious of its ability to carry the background of the Vietnamese characters (in Stringer's opinion), we can consider how Hui injects her humanist stance into the foreigner role of Akutagawa (and later Cam). Through this angle of interpretation, we are able to decode another kind of concern of Hong Kongers amidst the influence of Handover, namely their continuous, unstable 'Chinese' status vis-à-vis other groups of Chinese, which in turn problematizes their identity articulation. Such concern has evidently remained unsettled over the years, as we can see it in another film, *Durian Durian*, made almost 20 years later with a similar interest in social outcasts of Hong Kong society. I believe that the director Chan also unconsciously employs the protagonists to convey his worldview and I will discuss it in the next section.

3.2. *Durian Durian*: Mainland Chinese as Alter Ego

Durian Durian was Chan's fourth independent production since he turned his back on the commercial system of the Hong Kong film industry. Released in 2000, the film was funded by a European film sales company, Wild Bunch,[58] and shot on location in Hong Kong and China. The independence of this film allowed Chan to experiment with practices that were deemed risky in the highly commercialized Hong Kong cinema. For example, Chan used a non-generic

docudrama to convey his message without a pre-written script, and cast two non-professional actresses, one from the Mainland and the other from Hong Kong, to be the leads.[59]

Durian Durian tells the story of two Mainland Chinese women, who strive for illegal survival in Hong Kong some time around the official Handover, but later return home to China. The narrative structure is bifurcated. The first half, set mainly in Hong Kong, is an extension to Chan's earlier work *Little Cheung* (1999). It gives the background of a nine-year-old illegal child immigrant, Fan (MAK Wai-fan), who is the only friend of little Cheung's, a Hong Kong boy of the same age from a dysfunctional family.[60] Born to a Hong Kong father and a Mainland mother in Shenzhen in the south of China, Fan overstays in Hong Kong on a three-month travel visa so that her family, disintegrated due to different immigration policies of both places, can reunite. However, she cannot go to school but stays home due to her illegal status. She may help her mother, another overstayer, to work illegally washing dishes in an alleyway. There Fan meets a twenty-one-year-old Mainland prostitute, Yan (QIN Hailu). Thereafter, the film's perspective passes onto Yan and shows snapshots of her illegal prostitution during those three months of sojourn in Hong Kong that her travel visa allows.

The second part of the film tells Yan's life in the northeast of China after her prostitution in Hong Kong. She is a single child of a well-off family living in a post-industrial place where everyone of her generation desires to go elsewhere to make a living. At the end, she decides to stay while Fan is repatriated by the Hong Kong government to China.

Insofar as the realism is concerned, the influence on *Durian Durian* can be traced back to films such as *Boat People*.[61] It may also align with local docudramas, documentary or semi-documentary films such as *Ban Bian Ren / Ah Ying* (Allen Fong, Hong Kong, 1983), *Centre*

Stage (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1992) and *Nan Sheng Nu Xiang / Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema* (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1996). They are usually heavily inscribed with the presence of their directors in such ways as the director undertaking the role as the interviewer, or telling their personal stories. These productions, according to Hjort, are strikingly marginal among other Hong Kong films.[62]

Through the Mainland protagonists' eyes, *Durian Durian* looks at Hong Kong's current situation concerning illegal child immigrants and Mainland prostitutes at the turn of the twenty-first century. These social rejects expose indirectly the fact that late capitalism has taken its toll on both China and Hong Kong.[63] Their temporary presence in Hong Kong also queries obliquely the effectiveness and the limitations of the 'one country, two system' framework. In this regard, *Durian Durian* can be grouped comfortably with those post-Handover features that concern themselves with different socio-political matters in the new era. For example, though *Nan Hai Shisan Lang / The Mad Phoenix* (Clifton KO, Hong Kong, 1997) is about the life of a forgotten librettist of Cantonese-dialect opera and the post-war Hong Kong, many dialogues are satirically allegorical to the effect of the Handover on Hong Kong. *Deng Hou Dong Jianhua Fa La / From the Queen to the Chief Executive* (Herman YAU, Hong Kong, 2001) is based on the real story of twenty-three prisoners who have committed serious juvenile delinquency in Hong Kong before 1997. The verdict, which the British Queen was supposed to give, became the duty of Hong Kong's Chief Executive. However, it had not been carried out by the time when this film was made, thus exposing the inefficacy of the local legal system.

Unlike these aforementioned films that are concerned only with the Handover effect on Hong Kong, Chan embraces both Hong Kong and China in *Durian Durian* to explore their vicissitudes. This allies the film also with those made by China's Sixth Generation filmmakers, such as

Mangjing / Blind Shaft (LI Yang, China / Germany/ Hong Kong, 2003) about the plight of Mainland coalminers, and *Shijie / The World* (JIA Zhangke, China / France / Japan, 2004) about those working in a Mainland theme park.[64] Many reviewers appreciate the way in which Chan represents the Hong Kong-China relationship after 1997. Writing a monograph on *Durian Durian*, Wendy GAN believes that it is 'an exploration of "one country, two systems" in not just political, but also spatial and affective terms'.[65] The 'China' depicted in this film cannot be separated from Hong Kong and its situations. CHENG Shui-kam notices Chan's departure from describing the China-Hong Kong relationship as that of the mother to son. Instead, Chan foregrounds their business partnership in which China resembles a prostitute while Hong Kong is the client.[66]

Other critics focus on Chan's adroit use of formal elements. For example, Acquarello praises the cinematic articulation of the disparities between Hong Kong and China:

> Chan uses contrasting camerawork and color palettes to illustrate the dichotomous lifestyles of the two regions: the dark, saturated hues of anonymous hotel rooms, rapid cuts, and frenetic pace of Mongkok's streets seem alien and incongruous with the longer takes, medium shots, and warm tones of northeast China.[67]

As Chan states: 'My last few films have followed closely the social development of Hong Kong. I am more concerned about evoking the local people's sentiments, than taking any political stance'.[68] An investigation into Chan's apparently detached outlook, which could be found through his Mainland protagonists' privileged viewpoints, may discover otherwise. It would help us know more deeply how Chan feels about being Chinese nowadays, when Hong Kong and China are undergoing abrupt changes under late capitalism. Through Chan, we can then glimpse the attitude of the like-minded Hong Kongers.

3.2.1. Director's Alter Ego

While Chan emphasizes the bond between 'home' / 'homeland' and his Mainland protagonists in *Durian Durian*, the way in which Chan deploys them as possible alter ego and its extension could unconsciously stimulate considerations on Hong Kongers' rootlessness, and bring forward the questionableness of 'Chineseness'.[69]

As Chan insists on shooting the film without a pre-written script, many lines are improvised and shots are taken from the actors' everyday lives to reflect reality.[70] It follows that the two protagonists are very important narrators to walk the audiences through their stories. While telling us in voice-overs about what they think, they inevitably also recount Hong Kong-China's involvement in the economic globalism which they, similar to Hong Kongers, are part of. Since Derrida affirms that 'to make the other an alter ego, Levinas says frequently, is to neutralize its absolute alterity',[71] the two Mainland protagonists have arguably been devised respectively to become Chan's alter ego and its extension, and to embody the director's view.

Moreover, through their outsiders' eyes, the two Mainland females debatably see Hong Kongers clearer than Hong Kongers themselves do when the latter are already used to the environment and have failed to realize their own particularities and sense of loss. Hong Kongers in this regard substantiate Abbas' argument about 'reverse hallucination' that they fail to see what is there while Hong Kong's cultural space is always on the verge of disappearance.[72]

We will first discuss below why and how Chan could possibly have employed Fan, the illegal child immigrant, as his alter ego. By understanding Yan as an extension to Fan's alter ego role, I

will argue that the bond between these women resembles a loop allowing them (and indirectly, the audiences) to ponder their 'Chineseness', but it will also mean a state/stage of indeterminacy of being (as in diagram 3).

3.2.1.1. Fan as Alter Ego

In this sub-section, I argue that Chan's camera takes up Fan's perspective in the first half of the film. In turn, Fan effectively embodies Chan's worldview. There are reasons why child characters (which are the marginal ones) are deployed to represent the film's perspective. According to Abbas:

> The ambiguity of the figures of the native, the marginal, and the cosmopolitan as figures of the postcolonial serves to remind us of the problems of representation.[73]

As *Durian Durian* stems from *Little Cheung*, we could speculate that Fan continues Cheung's view to make clearer sense of this frantic world than the adults do, because the latter are already used to its bizarreness. Chan says Hong Kong children tend to have 'old souls' as they spend much time watching television.[74] They have already seen too much of this world when they physically come of age. In this case, Mainland children like Fan, who have to undergo ordeals of split family and rejected immigrant status, might have 'older' souls. Despite the fact that these children's 'fresh' pairs of eyes may not last long, it is their 'old souls' that serve as sites of identity negotiation for themselves (and indirectly, the audiences) to query the absurdity out there.

Child characters are also helpful in bypassing social taboos. For example, Iranian cinema has shown a trend of employing children in poetic realist films since the early 1980s to represent Iran's historical changes and to circumvent taboos such as interactions of the opposite sex in films.[75] Hence, we can expect that by taking Fan's perspective in the first half of the film, Chan turns Fan into his 'silent spokesperson' so that he can investigate sensitive topics indirectly. For instance, in representing other illegal child immigrants and enduring illegal survival in Hong Kong, Fan's role leads the audiences to cogitate on the negative effect of the immigration policies of Hong Kong and China.

Moreover, by adopting Fan's perspective, Chan inevitably casts doubt on the essential meaning of 'Chineseness'. Specific questions may include: If 'Chinesness' is meant to join ethnic Chinese together, why are there inequalities between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese regarding the right of abode even after the political reunification? Are all Chinese really equal? These questions will remain unresolved as long as the cultural, social, and political transitions between the colonial era and post-coloniality of Hong Kong persist.

In this regard, Fan is congruous with those children in films that aim to decry the relentless world. For example, Krishna in *Salaam Bombay!* (Mira Nair, France / India / UK, 1988), Ponette in *Ponette* (Jacques Doillon, France, 1996), Lilja and Volodja in *Lilja 4-ever* (Lukas Moodysson, Denmark / Sweden, 2002), Osama in *Osama* (Siddiq Barmak, Afghanistan / Iran / Ireland / Japan/ Netherlands, 2003), and all child characters in *Lakposhtha Hâm Parvaz Mikonand / Turtles Can Fly* (Bahman Ghobadi, France / Iran / Iraq, 2004), whose childhoods are distorted by war, poverty, death and adults' selfishness.

Fan's privileged vantage point, however, is adopted with understated cinematography. Chan maintains a predominantly calm, documentary feel by keeping a considerable distance between the actors and his camera, letting the actors interact with the claustrophobic and stressful environment, and propel the plot accordingly without dramatization. However, unlike the adult characters who usually occupy off-centred frame positions or are seen as appearing in slit images, Fan is granted more opportunities to take centre stage. Chan pulls her closer to the audiences through medium shots or close-ups. This is most obvious in the scene showing how Yan and Fan meet.

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Still 27: Fan takes centre stage while Yan has only her legs shown.

Fan is seen working industriously on the dishes in the alleyway when Yan walks by (Still 27). The camera's perspective remains with Fan while Yan, the supposed female lead, has only her legs (and later her back) shown. In this respect, Chan defeats the purpose of using docudrama to minimize his interception by actively letting the little girl win our attention and sympathy.

Even in scenes in which Fan is supposed to be absent, Chan maintains the childlike, voyeuristic observation through his camera. Many shots in the first part of the film are taken at waist level instead of the usual eye-level, much resembling the viewpoint of the nine-year-old Fan who

seems to be peeping at the adult world that is so nearby physically, yet also very alien to her own. For example, we see her father going around to do street peddling and to go into a bank. We also see Mainland prostitutes waiting for business in cheap restaurants. Camera height thus creates an illusory effect that these are seen by the little girl, who is probably hiding somewhere near the camera operator to peek curiously at the adult world. She remains there as a silent yet frowning onlooker, not quite knowing what exactly is going on. Fan's omnipresent perspective is evident later on when a flashback image discloses that she witnessed how Yan's teenage pimp was attacked by the South Asian illegal worker with a durian.

Fan thus serves as a suitable alter ego for Chan to project his worldview. We will next discuss Yan's possible role in this film and I will argue that hers is not the director's alter ego, but an extension to the alter ego.

3.2.1.2. Yan as Extension to the Alter Ego

Unlike Fan who once aspired to live in Hong Kong but is disappointed by reality, Yan is disillusioned. She prostitutes herself throughout her three-month stay in the place without taking any holiday, in order to earn more money before returning home. Hong Kong's Victoria Harbour (Still 28) makes her think of river Mudanjiang in her hometown (Still 29), visually sharing similar frame composition and connected together via a dissolve.

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Still 28: Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong.

Still 29: Mudanjian, the northeast of China.

When Yan is home in the second part of the film, however, she is not excited and practically all she talks about with her friends is their past school life in a local Chinese opera school. Yan is either 'living' in the future or in the past. She is just not *there* living her current life.

Nevertheless, if we interpret the friendship between Fan and Yan from the angle of the problematic 'Chineseness', we may be able to find another kind of bond between them. I suggest understanding Yan as a grown-up version of Fan, who has a hard life due to her Mainland Chinese status. Their friendship could be thought of as a dialogic sphere for the grown-up stage (represented by Yan) of an imaginary person to look back and evaluate how she has been doing since her childhood (represented by Fan), while also for the childhood stage to forecast what it would be like in the future. Yet the exchanges between these two stages of life halt the identity of this imaginary person from developing and result in a cinematic articulation of an indeterminate state/stage of self (diagram 3). Together, they resemble a 'liminal signifying space', according to Bhabha, 'that is internally marked by the discourses of minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense locations of cultural difference'.[76] Moreover, these Mainland Chinese, as the *same* and *different* from Hong Kongers, represent a site for Hong Kongers to contemplate and appreciate the transformability of

their cultural characteristics, and to respect that of the others. Hence, the effect is comparable to that of the freeze-frame shot that ends *Boat People*. In this way, what the two protagonists embody is not simply the interconnection between two places or two Chinese societies, but also how people culturally come to terms with the insurmountable context amidst old and new eras.

Two kinds of incidents cinematically present the fates of the two protagonists as dovetailing with each other in a loop, instead of running in a parallel manner: Bathing others and consuming durian.

3.2.1.2.1. Bathing Others

The first one is bathing others as a gesture of fulfilling filial piety, a cultural concept highly upheld among ethnic Chinese.[77]

When Fan's crippled father stays with the family in China early on in the film, Fan and her younger sister are shown helping their father to bath. This is a filial duty and an enjoyment for Fan because it is the only time when the family is united under no pressure. Chan depicts the gratification in a spacious ambience with long shots (Still 30). We never see this happen again when the setting moves to Hong Kong.

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Still 30: Fan helps bath her father.

Still 31: Yan baths her client.

Conversely, bathing others is a torture for Yan when she is prostituting. She has to bath each client twice as a part of her service. This causes the skin on her hands and feet to peel after too much of washing. Chan emphasizes Yan's ordeals by closing up on the male bodies she washes (Still 31).

During the preparation of this film, Chan interviewed many Mainland prostitutes. He later estimates that 'probably over 80 or 90 percent of the mainland prostitutes in Hong Kong are selling themselves for this [filial piety]. It is the only way they think they can make enough money to repay their parents and support them'.[78] This implies disturbingly that Yan's prostitution (and bathing service) and her wish to make as much money as possible within a short time could be the distorted filial piety gestures. Yan probably knows that this mishap may stay with her forever. Hence, when she is taking a public bath alone in her hometown, she washes her feet, which once peeled, in particular.

Bathing others in this case turns into a scene/site for us to rethink what fixed cultural values (such as filial piety) really mean. From bathing father (in Fan's case) to bathing clients (in Yan's case), Chan shows his concerns and queries about people's good intention that could ironically lead to

self-corruption. Likewise, the 'Chineseness' concept is not wrong as long as people understand its possible flexibility and apply it wisely. However, in reality, many people adhere to it strictly and create unnecessary tensions to themselves and to others, which Chow terms as 'violence'.[79]

3.2.1.2.2. Consuming Durian

Besides bathing others, the two females are aligned by durian as parts of a self, where durian serves as the leitmotif to stitch all parts of the film together. Chan says: 'Durian is a strange fruit. People who like it thinks [*sic*] it's the greatest, people who don't think it really stinks. That's a lot like different people's reactions to Portland Street [red light district in Mongkok area of Hong Kong] and the people there'.[80] Chan insists that he just uses durian to introduce the characters. Durian may not carry any metaphor, such as what Chan claims,[81] yet the scenes of consuming durian could gravitate much thoughts around the two Mainland protagonists.

The first time a durian appears is when it is used as a weapon by the South Asian worker to hit Yan's pimp at the back. Not knowing who the attacker is, the pimp can only avenge his injury later by eating another durian. Much later on, durian becomes Fan's birthday present, New Year present and souvenir from Shenzhen to Yan sent by Fan. Neither the two females nor their families are familiar with this strange fruit from Southeast Asia, yet they are excited about it. The cinematic portrayals of how the two girls and their respective family / friends open the fruit to eat thus create similar amusement. In particular, the durian is given prominence through close-up or centred frame position (Stills 32, 33).

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 32: Fan and her family are opening the durian.

Still 33: Yan and her friends are opening the durian.

It is at these moments that the director unconsciously lets the two females mirror each other in their corresponding stage of life, and scrutinize the gains and losses of growth. An imaginary loop then forms in the plot, turning the development of self into a state/stage of indeterminacy that the two females embrace during their exchanges.

Hence, although Chan does not deliberately employ Fan and Yan to personify his worldview, the way he favours their viewpoints expresses such a tendency. Seen in this light, *Durian Durian* offers us another viewing experience that is more subtle than what Gan, Cheng and Acquarello argue for the exploration of the political indication of the Hong Kong-China relationship in this film. The two Mainland protagonists allow Chan (and Hong Kongers in general) to scrutinize the problematics of 'Chineseness', while letting us consider how this kind of cultural concept should be carefully handled when we are negotiating our stance in this everchanging world.

3.3. Cinematic Articulation of 'Chineseness': Summary

Boat People and *Durian Durian* are based on real-life material of Vietnamese refugees and Mainland Chinese (illegal child immigrants and Mainland prostitutes) living as social outcasts in

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Hong Kong. They have once made headlines in the local and international mass media and consequently elicited lots of controversy.

By taking up the standpoints of these social rejects and turning the protagonists effectively into their alter egos, directors Hui and Chan illuminate these people's background stories with a humanist perspective and allow audiences to understand them. *Boat People* tells us the reasons why Vietnamese refugees, who are mostly ethnic Chinese, had to leave their country to continue surviving. *Durian Durian* is concerned with the desire of the illegal child immigrants to reunite with their disintegrated families that are split by the Hong Kong-China border and the difference in immigration policies of the two places. Besides, it explores the reasons why Mainland prostitutes sell their bodies in Hong Kong. Through dissecting their stories, the directors could possibly also have invited Hong Kongers to ponder their own 'Chinese' status with reference to these other groups of Chinese when they are re-orienting themselves in the new era, though a state/stage of indeterminacy is likely resulted. In the next section, I will turn to evaluate the existence of this state / stage of indeterminacy in the transitional identity.

4. INSIGHTS INTO HONG KONGERS' IDENTITY QUEST DURING TRANSITION: INDETERMINACY

I have just argued how Hui and Chan effectively employ an alter ego in *Boat People* and *Durian Durian* to encourage Hong Kongers to contemplate introspectively their self-worth with regard to their own transformed 'Chineseness' and that of the other groups of Chinese. As 'Chineseness' tends to change with the context, so does people's relation to such cultural traits. The resulting situation would be a state/stage of indeterminacy amidst people's self-readjustment that comes before their identities can fully transform into the next stage (see diagram 3). I have thus

suggested that there are moments in the two films that arguably give such insights, as in the freeze-frame shot in *Boat People* and the bond between the two females in *Durian Durian*.

In this section, I will assess what such state/stage of indeterminacy suggests to the continuous self-rediscovery of Hong Kongers. I will argue that the situations would in effect offer people an opportunity to choose the best direction for future transformation of self.

Let us return to diagram 3 at the beginning of this chapter. The state/stage of indeterminacy that could happen in the middle of the 'becoming' of identity would ostensibly create a crisis (especially a cultural one as far as 'Chineseness' is concerned). This is just as what Chow argues about the intervention between cultures.   Intervention, in her sense, does not have to be confrontation. It could be understood as negotiation, compromise, or survival, when people did not have a cultural/national centrality.[82] In other words, Chow's opinion can be read as: No matter how bad the situations are, there are always solutions to the problem. Going along a similar line of thought, we may be able to see that if 'Chineseness' elicited people's self-doubt during historical transition and caused indeterminacy amidst the 'becoming' of their identity, it also implied an opportunity for those involved to make better adjustment to themselves before they further constructed their sense of being.

I shall cite the experiences of Hui and Chan as Hong Kong filmmakers in making use of such opportunities to support my point here. *Boat People* led the director and the audiences to confront their questionable 'Chineseness' by learning about themselves through other group of Chinese, yet at the same time it also enabled Hui to gather enough funding for a humanitarian cause and to draw local people's attention to Vietnamese refugees' lives, feelings and thoughts.[83] This can explain why Hui has left out so many details about the political aspects of Vietnam in

the film. Moreover, as far as the film aesthetics are concerned, the director offered a fresh viewing experience for her audiences since no filmmaker had ever done any epic scene in Hong Kong before her, not to mention working with a cast of semi-popular stars (Lam and Miao were very popular back then, while this film marks Lau's and Ma's début).[84] Seen in this light, Hui as a Hong Konger and a Hong Kong director, has changed her identity crisis in between cultures and between historical eras into possible opportunities to negotiate her stance. Similarly, Chan as a diasporic Chinese living in Hong Kong can clearly see stories from both sides of the Hong Kong-Chinese border. Unlike films such as *Long Arm of the Law* that have stereotypical portrayal of Hong Kongers and Mainlanders, there are no absolutely good or villainous people in *Durian Durian*. Be they Mainland prostitutes, illegal child immigrants from China, pimps and triad members in Hong Kong, illegal manual workers from South Asia, all of them simply try to make the best of living. What they show us is the essence of life during a transitional stage.

Hence, the seemingly state/stage of indeterminacy, opened up by doubtful cultural qualities like 'Chineseness' during people's self-reinvention, could be viewed positively as a chance for them to appreciate the past before steering towards the best possible direction in the future.

5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored another possible nature of identity during transition – indeterminacy of being, that Hong Kongers have gone through during the historical, social, cultural and political changes in Hong Kong's recent history. Furthering my argument on transformed 'Chineseness' of Hong Kongers in section 2.2., Chapter 1, I believed that while people were adjusting their Chinese qualities to the advent of a new era, they received the most obvious impact when they were facing other groups of rootless Chinese. Two socio-political incidents in Hong Kong

offered Hong Kongers the occasions to rethink of their own stance as being Chinese without a cultural/national centrality. One was the influx of Vietnamese boat people; the other was the unlawful stay of Mainland prostitutes and illegal child immigrants.

The adjustment of Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness' may bring along a state/stage of indeterminacy in their self-reinvention. I elaborated on my point by closely examining the relationship between the directors and their possible alter egos in *Boat People* and *Durian Durian* respectively. In *Boat People*, I suggested the Japanese male lead, Akutagawa, embodying Hui's humanist belief for reasons concerned with the international relations and Hui's half-Japanese background. Akutagawa's philanthropic attitude towards his Vietnamese friends unfortunately leads to his self-sacrifice in helping the teenage Cam and her youngest brother to flee Vietnam, freezing in a final still image that could visualize the moment of the indeterminacy state/stage of self when Hong Kongers were experiencing historical transition. *Durian Durian* takes the perspectives of two Mainland Chinese females, who represent Mainland prostitutes and illegal child immigrants living stealthily in Hong Kong, in its bifurcated plot. I proposed that Chan's alter ego is the illegal child immigrant, Fan, because child characters allow audiences to reconsider their own situations while letting the director indirectly touch upon sensitive topic. I then argued that the Mainland prostitute, Yan, could serve as the extension to the alter ego, as she can be viewed as the grown-up version of Fan. Their bond represents another on-screen moment of indeterminacy when Hong Kong audiences introspect through understanding the cases of Fan and Yan. I concluded my argument by advancing that such state/stage of indeterminacy in the sense of being could be an opportunity for the people to find the best possible direction for further constructing their selves.

This chapter thus offers a case when Hong Kongers learn about themselves through understanding others from outside Hong Kong society. The next chapter will examine how Hong Kongers come to appreciate their own specificities during transition, through the tales of social underdogs inside their society and the communication tools that these protagonists use to allow themselves to be seen and heard.

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CHAPTER 4:

THE INTERMINABLENESS OF SELFHOOD

> I automatically thought that you had to marginalize yourself and that there wouldn't be an
>
> audience as a result.
>
> **–** director Atom Egoyan[1]

1. CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

When I discussed in the previous chapter the cinematic representations of Vietnamese refugees and illegal visitors from China to Hong Kong, I mentioned that filmmakers in Hong Kong and elsewhere stereotype these social rejects whom they and their audiences may not know well in reality. Just as many Hong Kong directors tend to marginalize others, such as the Vietnamese, in films, so are Hong Kong and its people often the objects of homogenization and marginalization in films produced by filmmakers from other places, such as the UK and China.

The World of Suzie Wong (Richard Quine, UK, 1960), an interracial romance story between an impoverished British artist and a prostitute in Hong Kong, reduces Hong Kong to predominantly an uncultured outland annotated with Star Ferry, street peddler market, noisy local neighbourhood, wooden hut shanty towns, and red-light district. These filmic imageries are different from those of Hong Kong films made in the same year. For example, while depicting the harsh life in the post-war Hong Kong, Cantonese film *Ke Lian Tian Xia Fu Mu Xin / The Great Devotion* (CHOR Yuen, Hong Kong, 1960) features the self-worth of an impecunious yet loving family of seven. Mandarin film *Ji Ren Yan Fu / The Deformed* (YUEH Feng, Hong Kong, 1960), recounting the true love of an initially monetary-based marriage between a rich but

facially deformed man and a beautiful girl of lowly origin, sheds those markers that signify Hong Kong in Western eyes. Nonetheless, like many typical Asian settings and characters, Hong Kong and its people continue to represent Oriental lust and exoticism in more recent Western films.[2] For example, *The Pillow Book* (Peter Greenaway, France / Luxembourg / Netherlands / UK, 1996) depicts the psychological and physical journeys, as well as the lascivious subjectivity of a struggling Japanese female writer/calligrapher while she is sojourning in Hong Kong.
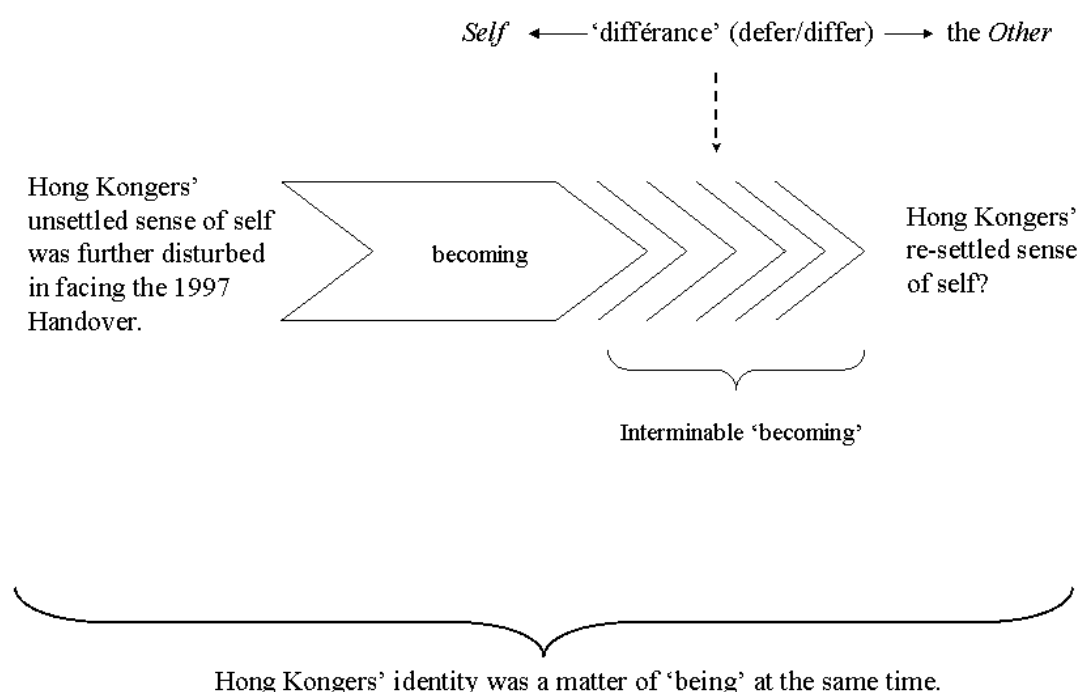
Conversely, Mainland Chinese directors tend to marginalize, if not deprive Hong Kong of its presence in films that may concern this Chinese geographical outpost. Chen Kaige, for example, was hired in the early 1990s by a Hong Kong-based production company Tomson to adapt Hong Kong novelist/scriptwriter Lillian Lee's novella *Ba Wang Bie Ji / Farewell My Concubine* for film.[3] Nevertheless, Chen cut away the original's ending that is backgrounded by the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) on Hong Kong's political future, in order to tell the story of the inhibited, homosexual love between two Beijing operatic performers over a period of 50 years. The director reasons that he needs a 'larger ending' for the film, which is to have one of the male protagonists commit suicide on stage while performing in the opera that signifies their love.[4]

The place of Hong Kong and its people are not just *othered* in these films, but also homogenized as the *Other*, where there should be different sub-groups in this *othered* group. Such othering and exclusion may also be found in real life, for example, when Hong Kongers were not included in the negotiations between the British and the Chinese governments over Hong Kong's socio-political future after the Handover. As we might recall that Hong Kong was also facing such issues as Vietnamese boat people and illegal visitors from China in the meantime, and tending to take a self-important stance, its case in film and in reality thus invite a discourse as to what / who *Self* and the *Other* really are.

This chapter will therefore be concerned with the study of another possible nature – interminableness – of Hong Kongers' transitional identity, resulting from the ambiguity of/between the concepts of *Self* and the *Other*. I will argue that an interminable delay in selfhood development during transition results from the ambiguity between *Self* and the *Other*. The idea may be visualized in a diagram as follows.

Diagram 4:

Interminableness of Hong Kongers' Selfhood during Transition

Self ◄── 'différance' (defer/differ) ──► the *Other*

Hong Kongers'
unsettled sense of self
was further disturbed
in facing the 1997
Handover.

becoming

Hong Kongers'
re-settled sense
of self?

Interminable 'becoming'

Hong Kongers' identity was a matter of 'being' at the same time.

I will start my discussion on *Self* and the *Other* by drawing on my previous arguments on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness and transformed 'Chineseness'. Inspired by the ideas of Derrida (see diagrams 1.1, 1.2. and 1.5.), Bhabha (see diagram 1.3), Hall (see diagram 1.4.), Ang, Chow and Abbas, I will contend that *Self* and the *Other* are in a paradoxical

relationship rather than the believed dichotomy and hierarchy between these entities. Their ambiguity may lead to interminableness in the selfhood articulation during transition.

I will build my case further by closely examining three post-Handover Hong Kong films. While *Ordinary Heroes* (1999) gives visibility and voice to a group of forgotten social activists, *Made in Hong Kong* (1997) brings several public-housing, lowly educated and unemployed teenagers to the fore. As a black comedy, *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2002) records the plight of a male-dominated neighbourhood in Tai Hom Village that had already been demolished by the time the film was theatrically released. These internal *Other* of Hong Kong, who are different from the external *Other* (as in the cases of Vietnamese refugees and illegal visitors from China whom I discussed in the last chapter), use different communication media to help us understand a society and its people during the time they have to undergo various kinds of transitions. I will conclude by foregrounding the significance of adjusting oneself tactically and psychologically when involved in the interminable delay in selfhood transformation.

2. A *SELF/OTHER* DILEMMA

As briefly mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the situations of Hong Kong and its people have been unclear in regard to Hong Kong's 'dominant' *Others* (such as other nations and cultures). On the one hand, Hong Kong(ers) see the uniqueness of themselves from learning the difference in the other nations / cultures / people. On the other hand, such distinctiveness of Hong Kong(ers) could also become the source of their marginalization from these *Others*' viewpoint. In this section, I will attempt to dissect the dilemma of the *Self/Other* by building upon my arguments on Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness and transformed 'Chineseness'. My discussion will be stimulated by the ideas of Derrida, Bhabha, Hall, Ang,

Chow and Abbas. I will first look at how *Self* and the *Other* are conventionally viewed, by employing Hong Kong(ers) as an example. Then I will highlight the paradoxical relationship between *Self* and the *Other*, and its possible result in an interminable delay in selfhood articulation.

2.1. *Self* or the *Other*

I have thus far elaborated my arguments on two major concepts that are ingrained in the scholarship of contemporary Hong Kong cinema but often handled divergently. One is the 'diasporic consciousness' of Hong Kongers and the other is pertinent to their transformed 'Chineseness'. I have argued in view of the historical, social, cultural, economic and political environments of Hong Kong during the Handover transition that both concepts manifested in Hong Kongers tend to be reliant on the prevailing circumstances. They are thus not fixed in nature. Rather, they are variants of what these concepts initially imply, as anchoring to the geopolitical concept of 'homeland' for 'diasporic consciousness', and a cultural centrality for 'Chineseness'.

In the original versions of these two concepts, clear demarcation is shown between the 'subject' or *Self* (for example, the imagined 'homeland' and an archetypal, cultural core), and the 'object' or the *Other* (for example, the diasporic and exilic nationals, and cultural peripheries). The experiences of Hong Kongers and the variables that they personify with regard to the notions of 'diasporic consciousness' and 'Chineseness', however, defy the fixed positioning of *Self* and the *Other* in such a relationship. The matters become more complicated if we also take into consideration the international relations in which China, Hong Kong and some other nations/cultures are involved. More specifically, it is difficult to identify clearly Hong Kong's

position in such situations as when Hong Kong is regarded as occupying a peripheral location from the sino-centric point of view, while performing its role to lead and facilitate economic opportunities into China. Hong Kong's Western counterparts may still consider Hong Kong as more important than any other Asian places for entering and contacting Asia, a function that Hong Kong has been assuming throughout its colonial and de-colonial eras.

Such ambiguous situations lead Chow to encourage those involved (chiefly Hong Kongers), who have yet to obtain a solid and clearly defined stance, to adopt non-violent tactics to define themselves. Chow terms them the 'tactics of intervention', as means for negotiating a standpoint in between cultures. Her argument is comparable to Derrida's opinion on the infinite substitutions and supplementations in the field due to the lack of a 'centre'. Abbas' exposition on the filmmaking condition of the 'new Hong Kong cinema', which the critic believes as a response 'to a specific and unprecedented historical situation, […] a space of disappearance where "imperialism" and "globalism" are imbricated with each other',[5] lends a practical example to substantiate Chow's idea.

Hence, we might think of the three films mentioned in the introduction to this chapter as having a mutual propensity of subjectivity. That is, by marginalizing Hong Kong (as in *The World of Suzie Wong* and *The Pillow Book*) as the *Other*, or depriving Hong Kong of its presence (as in *Farewell My Concubine*), these films and their filmmakers virtually proclaim and fix their *Self* position vis-à-vis Hong Kong(ers). They also ineluctably establish a hierarchy among places / people, which would evidently become meaningless in a transnational and transcultural world.

2.2. A Paradoxical Relationship

Here then arises the issue of the distinctiveness and relationship between *Self* and the *Other*. It helps us learn more about the peculiarities of Hong Kongers' self-transformation during transition, and its manifestations in film, as well as the bearings of any nation/culture undergoing major transitions (in every possible manner). There are initially two directions towards which we could think about the relationship between *Self* and the *Other*. Firstly, they are mutually exclusive; and secondly, they are in totality.

As discussed, Hong Kong's local and global experiences from the colonial to the de-colonial eras immediately offer a counter-example to the mutually exclusive relationship between *Self* and the *Other*. As for the second probable direction, Derrida argues that:

> The ego and the other do not permit themselves to be dominated or made into totalities by a concept of relationship. And first of all because the concept (material of language), which is always *given to the other*, cannot encompass the other, cannot include the other.[6]

The non-inclusion of the *Other* as such then indicates that totality would also be problematic, provided that there are infinite substitutions and supplementations within a structure that would be open due to the problematic 'centre'.

If their relationship is not mutually exclusive (that is, in an either-or relation) or in totality, can they possibly be in a neither-nor relationship? That is to say, there is not a total *Self*, as well as not a total *Other*.

In explaining 'différance', Derrida contends:

> It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called 'present' element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present.[7]

While the division of the 'present' from what it is not is an incident of difference, the interval in between them is a deferral. Arguably, this literary critique could be applied to any texts and occurrences that would involve the signification between a signifier and the signified. We might find such an example when Bhabha talks about the behaviour of the people living in between national borders. Bhabha argues:

> A contested conceptual territory where the nation's people must be thought in double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the *past*; the people are also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process.[8]

Extending their ideas to the relationship between *Self* and the *Other*, we may find that the situations of being *othered* would automatically generate in the *Other* a motivation for being *self-*

ized, and vice versa. Hence, this could be a way to think about the neither-nor relationship between these two entities. As for Hong Kongers, if their identity during the historical transition for some reasons was *othered*, by inference, theirs would also have a tendency to counter-homogenize in order to become *self-ized*.

Many Hong Kong filmmakers who often find their films (and themselves) trapped in the mire of *otherness* vis-à-vis films made elsewhere, have demonstrated the ethos of counteracting such awkwardness, which is intrinsic in many Hong Kong films discussed so far in this thesis. In other words, it is *survival* that the filmmakers in Hong Kong essentially pursue. Such *survival* does not only occur during a certain period of time, but throughout the years during which Hong Kong filmmakers have striven for their existence in the local/global film market. As the contextual change during the Handover transition tested the ways these filmmakers survived, arguably then, shedding alterity would also be most discernible in their films made during such transition.

According to Hall: 'The boundaries of difference are continually repositioned in relation to different points of reference'.[9] I shall also learn from the way and attitude with which Ang deals with 'Chineseness''s potential restrictiveness (see section 2.2.3., Chapter 1) and I would argue that: When and how this state of *otherness* could be transferred to become Hong Kongers' *uniqueness* or *Self* is a matter of politics.[10] Hence, simply putting Hong Kong in the place of the *Other* (or the *Self*) and the *non*-Hong Kong people/context as the *Self* (or the *Other*) in films would be too simplistic to articulate the actual complications involved in these relational postures.

Nevertheless, another level of complications arises. If the state of being homogenized triggers the *Othered*'s action to strive for difference, uniqueness and perpetual appearance (instead of *dis-*appearance or *mis*-appearance as in Abbas' sense) by means of specific tactics to strengthen their selfhood, who then are the ultimate *Self* and who the ultimate *Other*? In other words, instead of the belief that *Self* sees the otherness in the *Other* in order to recognize the existence of *Self*, the *Other* now sees the self-strengthening opportunity in itself induced by its otherness. It follows that *the Other could also be its Self at the same time, thus creating a Self/Other 'cultural androgyny'* (a term borrowed from Yau when the author talks about the flexibility and counter-conventions of Hong Kong cinema in her introduction to *At Full Speed*).[11] Such 'cultural androgyny' can be found in the case of Hong Kong vis-à-vis its 'dominant' counterparts. It follows that the dichotomy of *Self/Other* becomes meaningless. It would be a paradoxical relationship in place of a straightforward hierarchy between *Self* and the *Other*.

Applying this logic to the ongoing process of 'identity as a matter of "becoming"', as postulated by Hall (diagram 1.4.), I argue that such a counter-homogenizing tendency could suspend *Self*'s (may also be the *Other*'s) construction progress and turn it into a matter of interminable 'becoming' (diagram 4). The selfhood in this situation would always develop into an uncertainty.

To further illustrate my argument for the effect of the ambiguity of *Self/Other* on identity construction during transition, I will turn, in the next section, to three post-Handover Hong Kong films that are considered as minorities in the Hong Kong film industry with their portrayals of the lives of social underdogs in Hong Kong. They are Hui's *Ordinary Heroes* (1999), and Chan's *Made in Hong Kong* (1997) and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2002). Contrary to the protagonists in films discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, characters in these three films cannot go anywhere. They remain stuck in Hong Kong, for they lack the means to go anywhere they want. Their portrayal

attests to the fact that Hong Kong's poverty level has been on the rise from 1971 (7.99%) to 1996 (14.14%), except between 1981 and 1986 when the Hong Kong economy was at its peak. The poor population reached an alarming figure of 1.25 million out of a population of a little less than 7 million in Hong Kong in 2002.[12] Were it not for the directors' intent to bring their stories to the silver screen, these social underdogs would find it extremely hard to become part of the collective imagination of Hong Kong society.

In fact, by placing these forgotten social groups on-screen and giving them the place and respect that they lacked in society, directors Hui and Chan have also manifested the individuality of the general public in Hong Kong, who may not have the opportunity to speak their minds in the larger socio-political and transcultural context of Hong Kong.

By examining the visual elements indicating diegetic, interpersonal communications among these characters, I will undertake to show the cinematic articulation of the ambiguities between *Self* and the *Other* as embodied by these protagonists, and the possible consequence of the interminable 'becoming' during identity transformation. Establishing this case would allow us to appreciate more the importance of the way people choose to cope with the context than how/what identity would or would not become in the future.

3. CINEMATIC *SELF* AND/OR *OTHER* REPRESENTATION: *ORDINARY HEROES*, *MADE IN HONG KONG*, AND *HOLLYWOOD HONG KONG*

Being the *Other* in the West, 'accented' filmmakers would employ alienated and outsider characters in their films in order to project their diasporic / exilic sufferings and their interstitiality. Just as the *Other* from outside the host society would allow the people (as *Self*)

there to learn about themselves and others (as discussed in Chapter 3), there are often those *Other* from within the society who we forget about.

The three films that we will closely examine in this section turn our attention towards this internal *Other*. *Ordinary Heroes* brings us the story of several social activists in Hong Kong. They spent much time in fighting for causes, yet they were forgotten by the society. *Made in Hong Kong* jumps from the springboard of 'triad kids' genre film to spotlight several lowly educated and unemployed adolescents who are neglected by their families and the society. The film thus gives them an area to be seen, heard, and most important of all, understood. *Hollywood Hong Kong* initially tells the story of what had happened in the abolished Tai Hom Village before its abolition, but it confuses us with the identity of the *Other* and *Self*. This film heightens such ambiguity through *self-izing* the *Other* and *othering* the *Self*.

Besides featuring the stories of the internal *Other*, the directors give the protagonists the communication media to let them be easily seen and heard. While Hui uses fake, televised images in *Ordinary Heroes*, Chan devises inoperative television and suicide letters in *Made in Hong Kong*, and Internet access and flag signals in *Hollywood Hong Kong*. According to Naficy, mediation within the diegesis can be used by the 'accented' filmmakers as self-reflexive tools.[13] The result may reflect more about the mentality of the directors, than shortening the distance between the audiences and the protagonists. Likewise, I would argue that these communication media in films to be discussed are double-edged. They may highlight the existence of these neglected, socially abject people, but may simultaneously confirm these people's otherness in the society. Understanding their awkward situations may allow us to appreciate the situations of Hong Kong(ers) with reference to other nations and cultures. I will discuss the usage of these communication tools in each of these films in the following sections.

3.1. *Ordinary Heroes*: Fake, Televised *Self/Other* Images

Released in 1999, *Ordinary Heroes* initially had difficulty in finding investment due to the lack of commercial potentials of its topic about the lives of social activists and the social history of Hong Kong.[14] The film was inspired by the death of a nameless social activist in Hong Kong.[15] The director later secured a sum of funding from a friend's friend without any strings attached.[16] While most of the cast members are professional actors/actresses from Hong Kong with the male lead from Taiwan, the crew included active participants of Hong Kong's independent cinema.[17] The film earned Hui major awards in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Backgrounded by major social reforms and political incidents occurring in Hong Kong since the 1970s, *Ordinary Heroes* serves to wrap up the social feelings on the eve of the Handover.[18] The main plot revolves around the story of several fictitious social activists.[19] It is divided into three segments, namely *To Forget*, *10 Years of Revolution*, and *Not to Forget*, while intercepted by an unrelated street theatre that is based on the story of a real Hong Kong political activist NG Chung-yin (aka WU Zhongxian).[20] Yau (TSE Kwan-Ho), an activist who would soon become a politician, meets Sow (Rachel LEE) in a campaign which is aimed to help 'boat families' to acquire public housing after a conflagration where Sow is the only survivor of her family. Thereafter, Sow is attracted to Yau and becomes his loyal follower. Father Kam (Anthony WONG), who is modelled on an Italian priest Father Francesco Mello and his hunger strikes to fight for social causes in Hong Kong, works closely with Yau.[21] Kam is the mentor to Tung (Lee Kang-sheng), a high-school dropout from a single-parented family living in public housing, where his mother works at home as an illegal abortionist. Tung falls secretly in love with Sow. He acts as her carer when she suffers from amnesia after a sexual assault by Yau (who unleashes

anger at the Tiananmen Massacre on her) and a subsequent car accident. Tung leaves Sow when she can remember again because he does not want her to remember him as what he used to be. Meanwhile, Yau continues to move upward in his political career path. Kam, who has a strong Maoist inclination in addition to his Catholic priesthood, leaves Hong Kong to carry on his political idealism in China.

With a narrative that concerns a lot of real and fictitious socio-political activists and touches upon the causes that they fight for, Hui's film is anticipated to be read as a political drama. Reviews come mainly from among local critics. PO Fung believes that some of the elements in *Ordinary Heroes* have actually appeared in Hui's earlier works.[22] The humanist touch overwhelming the rational analysis in *Boat People* is believed to appear again in *Ordinary Heroes*. *Ordinary Heroes* may also be an inflated examination of the social movements found in *Jin Ye Xing Guang Can Lan / Starry is the Night* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1988), which depicts a female social worker who falls in love with a father and his son respectively within a period of twenty years. The critic believes that Hui's concern for the love relationships in the film has adversely affected the structural coherence of the film.[23] LONGTIN argues that Hui's highlight of humanist standpoint at the expense of strong political sense is a drawback, though it may also show the director's distrust of political struggles.[24] Li believes that the female lead's rape and amnesia allegorize the collective trauma of Hong Kong people, while Tung's intricate relationship with his mother reflects the one between Hong Kong and China. The critic reads the orphan status of Sow and Tung (after his mother's suicide) as a post-Handover meditation.[25]

Hui, however, insists on the humanism and existential concern in her film, which according to the director, attempts to delineate the lives (but not political life) of her characters.[26] Hence, she claims that the film is neither a love story nor a political film. As Hui says:

Right before '1997', people wanted to paint a rosy picture of Hong Kong, but Hong Kong had its dark sides and these people were there. These are people [whom] history won't write about. […] When people talk about Hong Kong, they always talk about the big-timers, the punks and the triad. Sure they need to talk about that, but they neglect to talk about people involved in Hong Kong society and people involved in social causes. No one had made a film about them either.[27]

That leads critic Sam Ho to comment that 'the scenes that work best are those when characters are simply going on with their lives'.[28]

Hui also admits that this film is both 'important and difficult' for her in expressing her feelings for Hong Kong and its people. Such sentiment is, according to the director, 'a kind of unnameable mixture of excitement, trepidation, despair, disillusionment and helplessness'[29] on the eve of 1997. The underdog story in *Ordinary Heroes* as seen in this manner serves as both a personal account for Hui and a public record of historical incidents. I will examine below the way in which Hui delivers her story with fake, televised images among other visuals.

3.1.1. Fake, Televised Images

As one of Hui's purposes of making *Ordinary Heroes* is to allow the story of these unnamed 'heroes' in the society to be finally seen and heard, it is to be expected that Hui pays special attention to the visual and audio elements. With regard to the latter, Hui uses the melody of a Chinese love song *Qian Yan Wan Yu / Endless Words* to fasten different sentiments together, as we always hear Tung playing this melody on his harmonica. Visually, I would contend that Hui consciously uses mediated images as parts of the diegesis. The reconstruction of the present/past through fake, televised images offers double opportunities for these socio-political underlings to

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be visible. This is when these images are meant to be seen during the period when the historical incidents unfold (that is, the characters' present in the 1970s and the 1980s), and by us when we watch this film (that is, our present, indicating the characters' time as a past). In doing so, the director clearly attempts to counterbalance the otherness of these characters. Yet I would argue that if they are understood from another perspective, these double exposures may cancel each other out and result in a situation where a *Self/Other* dilemma and a subsequent, interminable 'becoming' of identity are likely to occur (as in diagram 4). The characters and those they represent in the society would remain as the *Othered* when we are watching their stories on-screen.

Let us revisit two sequences of these televised images. They are placed in the second part of the film – *10 Years of Revolution*. One consists of fake newscasts, the other is a fake television interview conducted by Hui herself as the interviewer. Both are self-reflexive and suggestive of the ambiguity between *Self* and the *Other* qualities in identity, and the subsequent interminable delay in selfhood development.

3.1.1.1. Positive Effect

The first time such images appear is in a television newscast of a protest, in which all major characters (except Tung) are participating. It is a campaign organized in the late 1970s for the boat families, so that the Hong Kong government would pay attention to their request of living in public housing. Nevertheless, all protesters are arrested instead of protesting successfully, and the whole incident is reported in detail in the same day's newscast. The diegetic newscast occupies the whole filmic screen, creating the effect where the film screen is also the television monitor, and the film audiences become the television news watchers (Still 34). This newscast is

montaged with the staged, present sequence to highlight the background information of the incident that is not covered by the news report. It then segues into another diegetic newscast showing the protesters walking out triumphantly from the police station after they have been bailed out (Still 35).

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Still 34: An unidentified actor plays the role of news anchorperson in *Ordinary Heroes*.

Still 35: Extras play the role of protesters, who are walking out triumphantly from the police station after being bailed out on their illegal protest against the government.

In discussing how post-Handover films seek to resist disappearance and re-formulate nostalgia as a tactic for re-imagining the present and the future, Vivian Lee believes that '*Ordinary Heroes* is an attempt to recover a slice of social memory from oblivion and give it a new interpretation, which explains its similarity in style to the docu-dramas of Hui's early days'.[30] Lee's comment is consistent with this first appearance of fake, televised image sequence in the film. However, when investigating the director's ambition to resist the disappearing urban space, Lee's comment does not help us much in understanding further the reconstruction of the lost, collective memory and the ambiguity of such reconstruction. I will propose yet another possible counter-argument on this scene in the following.

3.1.1.2. Counter-effect

I would initially agree that Hui has the ambition to rebuild the social memory as far as this series of fake newscasts is concerned. However, the insert of the performed, present scene may also show Hui's distrust of such mediation and her possible intention to problematize the efficacies of both televised news and performed scenes.[31] The mobilization of these different scenes as self-reflexive techniques for the director may further hold back what the director initially plans for spotlighting these forgotten activists in this film.

I shall explain further. From the sequence ensuing this fake newscast, we are given the reason why the reporters are able to record the protest. It is because Yau, who is the organizer, signals his fellow protester to ask the reporters to come and cover their arrest. In doing so, Yau virtually stages the whole incident before the public through the (unconscious) assistance of the reporters. Rather than helplessly come under arrest, these protesters (as shown by Hui through montaging performed, present sequence and fake news footages) manipulate the mass media for their cause.

The protesters in the film then become accomplices of the local media in staging sensitized news. Social remembrance constructed through juxtaposing re-created, fake news footages and the performed, present sequence in this case thus allows audiences to see both sides of the story. On the one hand, the supposed *Other* are now empowered and become the manipulators of the publicity in this diegetic 'boat family' incident. Their voice is heeded somewhat quickly by the authorities, which eventually refuse any compromise, as revealed through another ensuing fake newscast (indicated by the news anchorperson wearing a different jacket).

On the other hand, the government's inefficacy is exposed through this staged publicity. Hui clearly states her distrust of the government and those who fight against it. Hui says: 'The government is becoming more bureaucratic. And the opposition does not have any real power to oppose'.[32] Hui's comment is footnoted by a small episode in the film where young Sow is able to hit the unguarded police officer (representative of the authority) easily with a rubber band.

Seen in this light, we are able to arrive at the conclusion that the boundary between truth and deceit is indeed blurred due to the deliberate juxtaposition of both the performed, present sequence and the fake newscast. Instead of propelling the plot forward, such deployment of another medium within the diegesis creates a disruption in the director's intention to visualize these forgotten activists. The effect is, however, different from an apparently similar storytelling technique in *Welcome to Sarajevo*, where the diegetic televised images remain rather truthful to tell the story of the protagonist who is a telecast reporter and whose life is partially defined by his appearance in televised news. The scenes in *Ordinary Heroes* are arguably closer to the comically staged, fake newscast scenes in *Good Bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, Germany, 2003) when the protagonist subjectively wishes that fake newscast could help stop the world from changing for his ailing mother after her coma during the fall of the Berlin Wall. In *Ordinary Heroes*, what is expected to be real, for instance, the televised newscast is but a staged publicity. What is seemingly unreal, that is the performed, present scene depicting this filmic protest, contrarily confirms us that we are only watching a film about a group of fictitious social activists who fight for a past, real social cause. This may then offer a counterbalance to Chow's opinion on looking at the native / oppressed / savage and the like. The critic contends:

> The activity of watching is linked by projection to physical nakedness. Watching is theoretically defined as the primary agency of violence, an act that pierces the other, who inhabits the place of the passive victim on

display. The image, then, is an aggressive sight that reveals itself in the other; it is the site of the aggressed. Moreover, the image is what has been devastated, left bare, and left behind by aggression.[33]

Those who are being watched in *Ordinary Heroes* are not necessarily the victims of 'violence'. On the contrary, they are those in control.

Moreover, as Naficy argues, 'self-reflexive techniques distance the audience from the film, undermining full identification with the diegesis and with its characters'.[34] Arguably, then, there remains a certain distance between the audiences and the characters (who are the representatives of the *Other* in real life) in *Ordinary Heroes*, offsetting Hui's intention to empower these characters to become *Self*, who would in turn *other* the mainstream authority. According to Derrida,

> The infinitely-other cannot be bound by a concept, cannot be thought on the basis of a horizon; for a horizon is always a horizon of the same, the elementary unity within which eruptions and surprises are always welcomed by understanding and recognized.[35]

Such understanding would not be achievable if the distance between the audiences and the characters is maintained. The *Self* then remains *Self*; the *Other* remains the *Other*.

3.1.1.3. Reconfirmed Counter-effect

The failure at empowering the *Other* is further confirmed with Hui's cameo appearance while Yau is working on another campaign based on the socio-political incident of the illegally staying 'boat brides'. Yau has moved successfully into the political mainstream by now to become a full-time politician. By playing an unnamed documentary filmmaker to interview Yau and thus

highlighting the self-reflexiveness in this scene, the director invites question to ask who are those being represented and underrepresented.

We see Hui coming to Yau's office to shoot some personal interviews with Yau and his colleagues such as Long Hair and Kam. It is implied in this scene that the documentary is initiated by the filmmaker, though the result could be another staged, political publicity. Close-ups of the inteviewees' faces deny room for the interviewer to be on-screen with them. Hence, we can only hear Hui's off-screen voice asking them questions and allowing them to answer directly to the audiences. Yet, rather than extol their active involvement in these socio-political campaigns and give them extra opportunity to express their views, Hui debatably makes use of this televised, make-believe documentary to interrogate their own political agendas (Stills 36, 37).

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Still 36: Yau speaks in politician's tone in Hui's make-believe documentary.

Still 37: Kam details his aspiration to Maoism (even though he is a Catholic priest) in the same make-believe documentary.

This intention is obvious in Hui's questions to these fictitious figures, and indirectly to politicians and political idealists active in the burgeoning political scene in Hong Kong. Hui's questions revolve around the actual plan that Yau devises to help the 'boat brides' and the practicability of

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their movements, for example, Kam's hunger strikes. While Yau answers in his best politician's tone (Still 36), Kam comes across as political idealist (Still 37). This scene echoes with how Hui thinks of these social activists, for Hui states elsewhere:

> I understand that people participating in politics in 1960s and 1970s Hong Kong actually only participated in it indirectly […] because there was no such ideology as democracy back then. Hence, those who wished to take part in politics were doomed. Revolution is only a dream. […] Those so-called political campaigners in Hong Kong collapse at once when they are intimidated by the real politics due to their naivety and ignorance about politics.[36]

This would explain why Hui concentrates on their personal lives rather than political career in this film. As Hui says: 'The complexities inherent in these [socio-political] causes involve very universal issues. Even idealists and heroes are limited by human foibles. It is not easy to be a hero'.[37] As I have just argued, under Hui's scrutinizing camera, these fictitious characters and the people they represent are thus still *othered*. However, such *othering* derives from Hui's concern for those (for example, other hardworking but quieter social activists and those needy people whom they help) who have been marginalized by these socio-political activists and their emergence above the rest of them.

In between these televised, fake documentary shots of her interviewees, Hui makes cameo appearances by mingling with these diegetic figures during a shooting break (Still 38). Such self-inscription thus blurs the boundary between real and unreal, true and untrue, as well as *Self* and the *Other*.

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Still 38: As part of *Ordinary Heroes*' narrative, the documentary filmmaker (that is, Hui) is chatting with her interviewees during the break outside Yau's office. She is shown here squatting next to Yau.

The self-reflexiveness in the first series of televised images and Hui's self-inscription in this second series of televised documentary then offer cinematic support for my proposition that the blurred demarcation between *Self* and the *Other* would cause an interminable delay in the 'becoming' process of an identity (diagram 4).

If Hong Kongers' selfhood/otherness during transition is frozen at that particular moment, could we say that it is an *always* reminiscent signification of Hong Kong defying disappearance and assimilation into the Chinese grand narrative after the Handover? In my opinion, Hui answers this question rather positively with her images. In 1997, Hui made a one-hour documentary *Qu Ri Ku Duo / As Time Goes By* (Ann Hui, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1997) to express her feelings for Hong Kongers in this personal memoir. The tone of this documentary is quite relaxing, recording the reminiscent conversations between Hui and several of her old schoolmates at the University of Hong Kong. Hui believes that this documentary is enlightening, as it allows her to revisit her past.[38] However, Hui's relaxed attitude in her personal memory does not come across as the same in *Ordinary Heroes*, as we might recall that this film could serve as both Hui's personal account and public record of social incidents. Although Hui urges audiences '*Not to Forget*' (the

title of the third segment of *Ordinary Heroes*), the social recollection is after all but a pain. It culminates in the impressionist finale that depicts the commemoration of the Tiananmen Massacre held annually on the Fourth of June in Hong Kong.

Slow-paced, swaying, handheld camera capturing the extreme close-ups of the candles in the rain in the finale resembles the director herself holding these candles and participating in this speechless mourning procession. Non-diegetic song *Xueran de Fengcai* (literally, Blood-stained Spirit) quickly reminds audiences of the commemoration.[39] The film ends with a freeze frame closing up on Tung and an unidentified boy among the mourning crowd (Still 39), echoing the one that ends *Boat People* (Still 40) and the suggested future uncertainty.

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 39: Ending freeze-frame shot in *Ordinary Heroes*.   **Still 40:** Ending freeze-frame shot in *Boat People*.

Hence, from this discussion of the problematics of Hui's representation of these social underdogs on-screen, we can add one more level of viewing experience on top of Lee's interpretation of these images as recovering social memory and giving new meanings to it. This additional thought, I have argued, coincides with Hui's doubt of the activists' political idealism while she is still concerned with them as normal human beings. While Hui expresses her concern for the

social underdogs in Hong Kong by problematizing their representation via televised images, Chan drops completely the function of television but resorts to suicide letters to let his underachieved protagonists be seen and heard. I will study his approach in the following section.

3.2. *Made in Hong Kong*: Inoperative Televisions and Suicide Letters

Made in Hong Kong was Chan's second feature and first independent production. Released in 1997 after the official Handover, it had been prepared for five years before actual shooting.[40] Although the story is related to the sovereignty transfer, the film is primarily connected with Chan's 'disenchantment with the entire commercial film industry in Hong Kong'.[41] Chan managed to collect the leftover film stock from other filmmakers' projects and secured a shoestring budget of HK$500,000 (around £32,000). Working with a crew of only five people and an amateur cast, the director completed the shooting within four months.[42] The film came as a surprise to the debilitating local film industry and earned multiple awards both domestically and internationally.

Set in contemporary Hong Hong in the pre-Handover period, *Made in Hong Kong* tells the story of four adolescents living in public housing. While three of them are dropouts from school, unemployed, and come from dysfunctional families, the other commits suicide for unrequited love. Moon (Sam LEE) is a half-hearted triad member and works for a triad boss on petty jobs such as debt-collection. He appoints himself as the protector to mentally-handicapped Sylvester (Wenders LI). They meet Ping (Neiky YIM), who has terminal kidney disease, while trying to collect debts from Ping's mother. Ping and Moon later fall in love and often hang out with Sylvester.

Meanwhile, a high school student Susan (Amy TAM) jumps to her death. Sylvester picks up her two bloodstained suicide letters and gives them to Moon. The gang of three thus decide to deliver the two letters for Susan. Moon imagines that bad luck seems to have come to them since then and blames it on the haunting spirit of Susan.

Moon accepts a killing job in order to earn money for curing Ping's disease but later fails to do it. He makes an enemy of a money lender, who later sends a follower to stab Moon. On discharge from the hospital after a month, Moon learns that Sylvester has been brutally killed by the triad boss for failing in drug trafficking. Ping has also died of kidney failure. To gain revenge on the cruel adult world, Moon finally gathers his courage to shoot both the triad boss and the money lender before taking his own life next to Ping's grave.

The subject of juvenile delinquency and lost youth is not unprecedented. Examples abound in different eras from various countries. Classics may include *Los Olvidados / The Young and the Damned* (Luis Buñuel, Mexico, 1950), *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, USA, 1955), *Tong Dang / Gangs* (Lawrence Ah Mon, Hong Kong, 1988), *Boyz N the Hood* (John Singleton, USA, 1991), *Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian / A Brighter Summer Day* (Edward Yang, Taiwan, 1992), *La Haine / Hate* (Mathieu Kassovitz, France, 1995), *Ônibus 174 / Bus 174* (José Padilha and Felipe Lacerda, Brazil, 2002). They feature different kinds of youth problems and simultaneously also expose the dark sides of these societies.

While paralleling these films which have a similar topic, Chan's successful independent production with a narrative that is associated with the impending Handover gave an unexpected blow to the highly commercialized Hong Kong film industry. Accordingly, reviews, which are mostly positive, also focus on its independence and allegorization.

On the film's production, critic Rayns believes that:

> It's at once an insider's attempt to unlearn some bad industry habits, a professional's bid to beat commercial rivals at their own game, and an outsider's criticism of the ways the industry has glamorised the current generation of juvenile delinquents.[43]

Bérénice Reynaud notes that Chan's film has started a trend of more genuine independent production.[44] Steve Fore also comments that *Made in Hong Kong* is among those off-centre Hong Kong films that challenge presumptions of what 'Hong Kong films' should be while not bankrupting the investors.[45] Gan thinks that Chan's film has traces of two popular genres, namely the triad film and the melodrama. The author argues that it can be read as 'a return of the repressed, as familiar commercial narrative modes begin to take over an otherwise independent film'.[46]

As for the film's themes, there are different interpretations ranging from a contemplation of the Handover to a realist representation of the social problems in Hong Kong. Terry Richards reads the abandoning of the children by their parents in this film as a metaphor of the British colonizer leaving Hong Kong, though the critic believes that the male lead Moon eventually decides his own fate.[47] Natalia CHAN discusses the relationship between the fatherless society and its 1997 allegory in this film.[48] Rayns comments similarly that the depiction of Moon's consciousness makes the film stand out among those Hong Kong films that feature corrupted youth.[49] Esther Cheung reviews the question of social class struggle when all the protagonists are from the grassroots level of Hong Kong society.[50]

Chan confirms that even independent films have to fulfil certain commercial requirements.[51] He admits that his film is not genuinely independent given that its distribution network is different from other independents. Yet, Chan assures of his responsibility to explore the changes concerning Hong Kong society. In the following, I will investigate his approach of using inoperative televisions and suicide letters to show his care for this society and to spotlight his otherwise neglected protagonists.

3.2.1. Semi-functional Communication Media

In giving his protagonists the chance to be seen and heard, Chan gives up the function of television as a major communication channel in today's world but resorts to the written word in the form of suicide letters to let the protagonists (and the youths in Hong Kong whom they represent) address to this world directly. This opens up the dialogic relations between diegetic/private sphere/letter, and non-diegetic/public sphere/manifesto. The film thus bypasses the generic boundary as a result. I agree that these youths (and those they represent) would be seen and heard this way. However, since their visibility has to come with their deaths, I argue that Chan's aim at highlighting their existence and *self-izing* them may be counteracted. They would still remain in an *othered* situation and the selfhood that they represent would be interminably in progress (as in diagram 4).

3.2.1.1. Televisions without Images

Let us first consider the malfunction of the televisions in Chan's film. In *Made in Hong Kong*, Chan does not ignore entirely the position of television that forms part of the protagonists' lives. We can still see the television sets in both Moon's and Ping's public-housing homes in spite of

the fact that the two families are destitute. The breadwinners (the fathers) of both families are absent from home, leaving only the mothers to do some lowly odd jobs (in Moon's case) or incur debts from different loan sharks (in Ping's case). Chan still reserves a place for the television set in the mise-en-scène to signify television as an irreducible element of the urban life, but he denies television the function of supplying entertainment or information. In short, the supposed communication medium of television in this film fails to assist people's inter-communication. Televison sets merely sit there as 'useless' pieces of furniture in the two houses, and witness the tragedies in these dysfunctional families to unfold.

This is most obvious in two incidents, the first occurring right after Moon has just accepted the job offered by his triad boss to kill a Mainland Chinese rival. Moon is home alone immersing himself in mesmerizing, techno music while playing with the pistol that the triad boss has given him for the job. Accompanying his frantic dance is the television set , which is turned on but with only 'television snow' (Stills 41, 42).

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 41: A medium long shot enwraps the television, which has only 'television snow', in the dark in Moon's flat.

Still 42: An extreme close-up of Moon's hand playing the pistol is silhouetted against the blinking television set in the same sequence.

If there really has to be a purpose for an inoperative television set to be part of the important visual elements in this scene, I would suggest that its 'function' is more to exacerbate Moon's

loneliness in his tiny, entrapping public-housing flat than to keep him company. As Cheung, in writing about the uncanniness of this film, says:

> *Made in Hong Kong* in fact contains a number of shots depicting the housing estates as prison houses. The barred windows, barbed wired fence of the playground and the grid-patterned walls of the corridor all foster a *mise-en-scène* of entrapment and imprisonment.[52]

This corresponds to Chan's feeling about Hong Kong's public housing in which he grew up:

> I [Chan] think public housing is a microcosmo [*sic*] of Hong Kong society. In Sau Mau Ping or Tze Wan Shan [public housing estates], for example, many youngsters joined the triads. In my mind, the public housing estate is the dark shadow of life. Either you do your best to get out, or your future is hell.[53]

The other incident in which the television set is part of the mise-en-scène takes place in Ping's house. Moon comes to look for Ping after surviving a nearly fatal stab. Yet Ping's mother, who opposes their love, tells him about Ping's death and scornfully turns him away. Moon is enraged. He releases his anger by smashing the television set that is not on.

As these two scenes come respectively prior to Moon's failure at killing the Chinese rival (the first scene) and success in killing himself (the second scene), the inoperative television in these scenes can then be read as foretelling Moon's doomed life. It turns him even further away from the spotlight that he has never found in life, instead of giving him a real opportunity to speak his mind.

3.2.1.2. Letters after Death

Chan is keen on helping these youths to be understood. He talks about his directorial intent:

> The reason why I [Chan] explore the topic about youngsters: On the one hand, I think most Hong Kong
>
> films have not investigated seriously the problems of young people. Even if there are films which depict
>
> youngsters in Hong Kong, they have not delved deeply into these young people's background and feelings.
>
> On the other hand […], the research that I did for this film tells me that most of these rebellious youths are
>
> driven to what they are now for complex reasons, for example, family problems, employment difficulties, a
>
> low educational level and so on. The biggest problem comes from their families. Most of these youths live
>
> in public housing and are high school dropouts. What can they do with such an educational level? As a
>
> result they hang out every day and get corrupted easily. This gives me inspiration to make this film.[54]

Chan's sympathy for these youths is well founded on facts. Apart from what he mentions here,
youth problems (such as juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, adolescent sexuality and pregnancy,
youth suicide and so on) have brought much trouble to Hong Kong society.[55] In order to give
them a space to speak freely, Chan employs the motif of suicide letters (accompanied by Moon's
life-after-death voice-over narration and Susan's 'repeated' death) to create a diegetic, though
problematic, otherworld for them.

The two suicide letters are left behind by Susan who jumps to her death early on in the film (Still
43). One of them is addressed to the girl's parents and the other to her love interest, the physical
education teacher who tears the unopened letter into pieces almost immediately when it reaches
him. According to Naficy:

> Letters stand in for those who are absent and inaccessible. They are awaited with bated breath, kissed, cried
>
> over, kept close to the heart, shared with friends, protected, dreaded, mutilated, and destroyed. […] Letters

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not only link people who are separated but also remind them of their separation. In this, they act fetishistically, both disavowing and acknowledging the trauma of displacement.[56]

In *Made in Hong Kong*, the initial role of these letters, however, is not to acknowledge the protagonists but to displace them from their entrapping houses when they undertake to deliver the letters. As these letters are omnipresent in the film, I suggest that the one that finally reaches Susan's parents literally becomes the fifth protagonist and assists these youngsters in declaring their manifesto to the world.

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Still 43: After jumping to her death, Susan lies in a pool of blood with her two suicide letters next to her dead body.

Meanwhile, the whole film is shot from Moon's viewpoint and narrated by his non-diegetic voice-over. Nevertheless, Moon does not just narrate, he also comments on Hong Kong's education system, the complexity of the adult world, his fellow youngsters' ignorance and naïvety in committing crimes that they are told to, broken families caused by men's irresponsibility and women's submissiveness, and so on. In this regard, he actually serves as the conscience for those of his age in Hong Kong. He is different from the young gangsters usually portrayed in Hong Kong films, such as the series of *Gu Huo Zi / Young and Dangerous* (I-IV) (Andrew Lau, Hong Kong, 1996-2000), as these others would participate in group fights or even murders without asking their triad bosses why. They believe what they do are heroic deeds. It is

then understood that Moon's narration would provide footnotes for Susan's unopened suicide letters. Together, they unfold the plot. For instance, Moon claims that the letters bring them bad luck and audiences are shown images of Sylvester being suddenly bullied on the street.

At the same time, Moon feels haunted after the letters have entered their lives. His imagination brings forth repeated imaginary images of Susan's death. Her death and the details before, during and after she jumps are shown repeatedly from different perspectives (Stills 44-49), for example, that of Sylvester, Susan's own, and the spectators. Chan takes these shots with different camera angles/distances and montages them with the routine stasis of Moon's team in unexpected manners, such as stop-action editing and overlapping/repetition. Shots of Susan's blood in red against the saturated hue of blue of this suicide sequence, as well as desaturated blood-trails bleached into white are also detailed whenever the director wants to create dramatic impact.

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Still 44	**Still 45**	**Still 46**
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Still 47	**Still 48**	**Still 49**

Stills 44 - 49: The director inserts Susan's death in various parts of the film. These scenes are shot with different camera angles and distances.

Seen from this aspect, Susan is given back her lost life on-screen, ironically because of the unopened suicide letters. She also literally becomes one of the indirect members of Moon's gang

that has already included Moon, Ping and Sylvester. Her suicide letter finally reaches her parents

after all the youngsters in this group have died prematurely. Yet it keeps on serving as their

manifesto when it is disclosed in the finale that both Ping and Moon have written some thoughts

underneath Susan's handwritten message. As a result, the suicide letter carries three last notes by

Susan, Ping and Moon respectively. Chan uses extreme close-up on the letter to show the

audiences their handwritten notes while they (as non diegetic voice-overs) read out their

messages. The director thus turns the written text from a personal, suicide letter into a dialogic

platform for these three youngsters to speak directly to the audiences / the world. Their voices

are finally heard and given perpetual tangibility in the form of a suicide letter.

3.2.1.3. Communication Breakdown

Yet, are they really allowed to speak freely and regain their *Self(ves)* through Chan's

sympathetic, cinematic space? One does not doubt it until the moment when we are told that the

voice-over narration is made by Moon after he has shot himself dead. Chan tells us blatantly

through this (dis)closure that these youths can only be noticed after their deaths. Even what we

are supposed to learn about their lives (that is, their visibility within this world) consists only of

imageries from the dead Moon's viewpoint. This makes the film to become ghostly and allows it

to bypass the boundary of the 'triad kids' genre.

Although these youngsters can finally enjoy themselves freely in the otherworld and can be

forever young, so that they can avoid facing the complex adult world and the imminent

Handover, there is still no place for them in the real world (Stills 50, 51). They remain as the

Others and their deaths signify only that they move from one entrapment to another, namely the

otherworld six feet under their tombs (Stills 52, 53). If these youngsters are meant to represent

the future of Hong Kong, the director arguably shows us his pessimistic outlook for the whole idea of the Handover. Empowering (and *self-izing*) the *Other* is still depicted as an impossible dream for these youths (and those they represent). Seen in this light, Hong Kong's development of its self-perception and self-preservation is shown as interminably deferred.

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Still 50: When the youngsters are still alive, they are always caught within all sorts of mise-en-scènes.

Still 51: Moon's cramped flat with the barred window looks like a cage.

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 52: They can only play freely in the open area of the graveyard – a place close to the otherworld. They can do anything they want there even standing on top of the dead without being scolded and despised for not respecting the deceased.

Still 53: Their tombs become their other enmeshment.

On the other hand, Hall argues that:

Identities are constructed through, not outside, difference. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term – and thus its 'identity' – can be constructed.[57]

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The identity or the *Self* in this case can be interpreted as dependent on the *Other*, thus offsetting the usual stigmatization associated with the *Other*. We may further see such a relationship as interdependent between *Self* and the *Other* in articulating existence. As such, *Self* can be *othered* while the *Other* can also be *self-ized* at the same time.

Hence, my discussion shows that I agree with Chan as fully utilizing the film's independence to test the limit of the commercialized Hong Kong film industry (as opined by Rayns, Reynaud, Fore and Gan) to explore themes that concern Hong Kong society amidst the influence of the Handover and economic globalism (as argued by Richards, Natalia Chan, Rayns and Cheung). Yet, I am also wary of measuring the film's effectiveness in thoroughly visualizing these social underdogs due to the ghostly presentation of their thoughts in relation to deaths and suicide letters. These social underdogs remain as the *Other*, despite Chan's attempt to *self-ize* them.

Whereas *Ordinary Heroes* and *Made in Hong Kong* demonstrate the tendency to put *Self* and the *Other* in a dominant-subordinate hierarchy when they tell the underdog story, Chan's *Hollywood Hong Kong* sheds this idea by alternating the roles of the supposed *Self* and the *Other*. I will discuss this film in the ensuing section.

3.3. *Hollywood Hong Kong*: Internet Access and Flag Signalling

Hollywood Hong Kong was the second half of Chan's Prostitute Dyad. Released in 2002 and funded by different overseas sources, this film showed three breakthroughs in Chan's oeuvre up to that time. The first breakthrough marked Chan's adoption of a black comedy to convey his message. The second registered Chan's deliberate attention to art direction and the metaphor of

the colour red for eroticism. The third was a change from working with an amateur to a semi-professional cast, most notably including professional actor Glen CHIN and Mainland Chinese star ZHOU Xun to play significant roles in this film. The main reason for such breakthroughs, according to the director, was to avoid being confined to making certain types of films.[58] The director's new attempt also gave evidence of his 'unusual' style.[59]

Hollywood Hong Kong revolves around the lives of several male villagers in the neighbourhood of the dilapidated Tai Hom Village, which is the oldest shanty town in Hong Kong. On the eve of its abolition in 2001 for land redevelopment purposes, a mysterious Mainland prostitute Tong Tong (who also uses alias Hung Hung and Fong Fong) (Zhou Xun) approaches the village to captivate these men's hearts. They include Mr. Chu (Glen Chin) (the owner of a roast pork shop), his two obese sons Ming (HO Sai-man) and Tiny (LEUNG Sze-ping), and a self-confessed, teenage gangster Keung (WONG You-nam). Only the youngest of these men, Tiny, remains friends with Tong Tong throughout the film. The others are attracted to Tong Tong and eventually become sexually involved with her.

Tong Tong is temporarily residing in the newly developed, luxurious residential project Plaza Hollywood across the road from Tai Hom Village. It turns out that she is a con-artist, pretending to be a teenager and then blackmailing these men after having sex with them. Her trick is finally noticed. She manages to escape narrowly from the men's revenge and goes to the real Hollywood in pursuit of her dream. On the other hand, all the men in Tai Hom Village remain stuck there.

Chan's venturing into a new terrain of stylized filmmaking and symbolism about de-masculinity is met with critics' applause.[60] Local critic Longtin opines that though the narrative focus is the

group of men living in Tai Hom Village, it is a story about their loss and fear in the changing environment.[61] This comment agrees with Chan's intent to make the film essentially a tragedy reflecting the post-Handover perplexity of Hong Kongers.[62]

Nevertheless, Chan states that he was more relieved than previously when he handled the topic about socially marginalized groups (and also Hong Kongers as marginalized by their 'dominant' *Others*) in *Hollywood Hong Kong*.[63] The change from self-negation (as in *Made in Hong Kong* with the premature deaths of all the youths) to self-release (as in *Hollywood Hong Kong* with all the males appearing re-settled after Tong Tong has gone) suggests that the director has somehow adjusted his worldview to become more embracing, most evidently in his choice of a black comedy.

As such, the Mainland *Other* as personified by the mysterious prostitute can be read as Chan's device in this film to help Hong Kongers re-articulate their *Selves*. However, as this *Other* character does not possess all the supposed *othered* characteristics typical of its kind, *Hollywood Hong Kong* thus offers us an interesting case to ponder what *Self* and the *Other* truly signify. I will discuss below with the illustrations of Internet access and flag signalling.

3.3.1. Double-edged Communication Media

With the intriguing relationships among all the characters in this film and everyone taking turn to assume the role of the 'dominant' and the 'subordinate', we might think of the status of *Self* and *Other* as not permanent but dependent on the change of standpoints and context. I therefore suggest that the resulting state/stage of an interminable 'becoming', caused by the difference/ deferral of 'différance' in the identity construction (as in diagram 4), would be similar to those

demonstrated by the examples in *Ordinary Heroes* and *Made in Hong Kong*. Yet, the dominant-subordinate hierarchy found between *Self* and the *Other* in the previous two films does not exist in *Hollywood Hong Kong*. The *Self* in this latter case (that is, the men in Tai Hom Village) do not receive much sympathy from the director due to their selfish, sexual desire for Tong Tong. Likewise, the *Other* (the apparently villainous intruder/seductress Tong Tong) is not punished at the end. As Bhabha argues about different identities along boundaries:

> Such assignations of social differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges in *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present.[64]

A case is thus established to disrupt the usual hierarchy and dichotomy between *Self* and the *Other*, turning the two seemingly separate entities into one and resulting in a 'cultural androgyny' of *Self/Other*. This is most conspicuous in the protagonists' use of the Internet and flag signals to communicate with one another.

3.3.1.1. The Internet: Re-masculinization or De-masculinization?

We will first discuss how Internet communication would blur the distinction between *Self* and the *Other*.

3.3.1.1.1. Re-masculinization

Hollywood Hong Kong celebrates a world where the Internet allows even the destitute to find their lost *Selves* and to build their self-confidence through online access. Its signification for Hong Kong(ers) can be seen as positive.

Arjun Appadurai once argued that:

> New forms of electronically mediated communication are beginning to create *virtual neigborhoods*, no longer bounded by territory, passports, taxes, elections, and other conventional political diacritics, but by access to both the software and hardware.[65]

Contrary to Appadurai's observation in 1996 that access to these electronic mediations is primarily reserved for transnational intelligentsia, Chan features Internet access in the close-to-demolition, dilapidated Tai Hom neighbourhood. This helps expand the neighbourhood virtually and keep it energetic, for it has become a common practice of going online even in one of the most impoverished corners in Hong Kong. Living a second life online and having it run parallel with the real life are easy, and arguably better for the marginalized people, as they do not have to be stereotyped or placed in a certain fixed position in the virtual world. More importantly, nobody will have to die to live their second lives and build their *Selves*, even if they have no choice and no extra means but to remain who / what they are in reality.

In an interview, Chan reveals that Tai Hom Village in Diamond Hill area is Hong Kong's prototype to him:

Of all the residents of Tai Hom Village, more than 80 percent were new immigrants from the Mainland. Many regional dialects could be heard, making it a microcosm of Hong Kong, just like Mongkok's Shanghai Street in the 1970s, or Tuen Mun's satellite town in the 1980s.[66]

The use of the Internet in this film can also be read as a relief for Hong Kong society several years after the Handover. Hence, Chan's socio-political understatement in *Hollywood Hong Kong* is less emotionally burdened than that in *Made in Hong Kong*.

More specifically, online access in the film allows the two teenagers, Keung and Ming (Chu's elder fat son), to grow their masculinity. Keung is re-masculinized / *self-ized* through the Internet when he is disconnected to his family and fellow gangsters (Still 54). Access to the Internet and knowledge of making websites allow him to create his own crudely-made solicitation homepage. Regardless of the business nature, Keung as an eighteen-year-old high-school dropout is ambitious to go beyond what and where he is situated at the moment. Chan thus helps him convey his thoughts through extreme close-up on his computer monitor (from Keung's viewpoint) on several occasions, so that the computer monitor fills the whole frame. At these particular moments, Chan uses a technique similar to that used by Hui in *Ordinary Heroes* to blur the boundary between the real world and the televised / virtual world. However, while both directors try to bring their protagonists an opportunity of visibility with their thoughts being heard and understood through these constructed, unreal images, their attitude and emotions are different. Whereas Hui burdens those constructed, televised images with melancholy, Chan fills Keung's computer monitor / silver screen with irony that makes audiences grin.

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Still 54: Keung pays tribute to the computerized image of a deified historical figure *Guan Di*, who is worshipped by local police and gangsters alike for his blessing for the fraternity and heroic courage that men live up to.

Still 55: Ming is surfing on the Internet for exciting pornographic sites as his major pastime.

As for Ming, he is similarly abandoned since his mother has run off from the family, leaving him a semi-mothering, de-masculinized job to take care of his younger brother Tiny. Ming is possibly quite shy in front of girls and among his male peers due to his unusually big size by East Asian standard. He would probably be a target of marginalization at school. For example, Keung does not address him by his name Ming but derogatorily calls him 'Fat Boy'. We learn from Tiny that Ming takes computer classes after school, where he can acquire the knowledge that he needs for searching pornographic sites (Still 55). This would at least fulfil his adolescence's sexual fantasies and help him regain his masculinity through imagination.

3.3.1.1.2. De-masculinization

However, Internet access could also be regarded as the agent of worsening their troubled sense of masculinity and, in general, aggravating their tendency of (self-)marginalization. Firstly, the two teenagers isolate themselves further from the tangible, outside world, as they spent much time with their computers and the virtual world. The result is that they do not know how to deal with changes and crises in life. Chan shows blatantly that these boys are very aware of the boundary

between Tai Hom Village and the luxurious Plaza Hollywood across the road. Instead of showing the anger about social injustice that we may found in the villain as in *Tengoku To Jigoku/ High and Low* (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1963), Keung and Ming decline themselves to a position that they do not mourn for the disparity between the rich and the poor. They simply avoid touching this social fissure when they can stay comfortably in their own 'cages'.

Hence, when Tong Tong asks Keung whether he agrees that Plaza Hollywood is a gorgeous high-rise residence, he initially responds negatively but then admits with a tone of self-denial that he cannot afford to live there. Tong Tong teaches Keung to compare the magnificence of Plaza Hollywood with Five-fingers Mountain, a symbol of domination derived from the Chinese classical novel *Journey to the West* that was authored by WU Chen-en in the 1590s (Still 56). By practising the way to appreciate the superiority of Plaza Hollywood, Keung confirms his lowly origin and *others* himself submissively (Still 57).

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Due to copyright issues, this still shot is not available in the electronic version of this thesis.

Still 56: Tong Tong teaches Keung how to use his fingers to perceive the magnificence of Plaza Hollywood.

Still 57: Keung later does the same gesture again on his own.

As for Ming, when the pig/pet Mama runs off from the Chus' pigsty and the whole family rummages in almost every corner in the labyrinthine Tai Hom Village to search for it, he does not cross the bridge to do the search in Plaza Hollywood. We see more of Ming's self-imposed confinement than the social injustice done to him. His faceless image behind the wired fence of Tai Hom Village against the backdrop of a vehemently high-rise Plaza Hollywood helps convey

this message (Still 58). He stands there helplessly, *othering* himself further when he (representing the young generation of Hong Kong) is not supposed to be confined.

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Still 58: After Mama runs off, Ming confines himself and his search for the pig behind the wired fence of Tai Hom Village. His faceless silhouette shown here creates a dramatic impact.

Secondly, while it is through ICQ (an instant messaging computer programme) that Keung meets Tong Tong, it is also through the Internet that Tong Tong blackmails him. Internet access in this situation becomes Tong Tong's accomplice. In addition, as Ming cannot find any new exciting pornographic websites, those not-very-updated ones (in Ming's opinion) thus push him out of his claustrophobic room. Instead, Ming is attracted to Tong Tong who subsequently also hoaxes him. The Internet then allows Tong Tong to become the 'dominant' *Other* to *other* the two teenagers.

Arguably, the Internet communication is double-edged. It helps these two boys to expand their horizons, but their overdependence on it would put them in a vulnerable situation and further marginalize them. Moreover, it becomes the film's motif to create ambiguities in the geopolitical gendering (Tong Tong as the feminized but sexually dominant individual, while the men as the de-masculinized, submissive group) and disrupt the usual dichotomy between *Self* and the *Other*.[67]

3.3.1.2. Flag Signals: True or False Alarm?

For those who are not Internet users in this film, Chan gives them another tool – the flag – to let them be seen from a distance while they are heard non-diegetically by the audiences (but not diegetically by those they are waving at).

3.3.1.2.1. Red Flag

A red flag usually symbolizes danger. In *Hollywood Hong Kong*, there is a scene where the action of waving red flags offers us at least two levels of reading the fluidity between *Self* and the *Other*. The red flag is initially waved by Mr. Chu (in place of Tiny) at Tong Tong who wants to locate the Chus among a jumble of zinc huts in Tai Hom Village from her temporary residence in Plaza Hollywood (Still 59). In return, Tong Tong also waves a similar red flag out of her window at Mr. Chu and Tiny (Still 60).

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Still 59: Mr. Chu is waving a red flag at Tong Tong to signal their whereabouts.

Still 60: Tong Tong is waving a red cloth/flag out of her window to respond to Mr. Chu's signalling.

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that this flag signalling game between Tong Tong and Tiny turns out to be a forewarning of Tong Tong's intrusion into these men's lives in Tai Hom Village. As Chan says that red is the theme colour in this film to signify sex, the imagery of

waving red flags between Mr. Chu and Tong Tong across the road foreshadows unabashedly that Mr. Chu will soon be the first victim of Tong Tong's blackmail hoax.[68]

Gan argues:

> While *Durian Durian* encourages sympathetic identification with the Mainland prostitute, in the latter half of *Hollywood, Hong Kong*, Tong Tong's unveiling as a Mainland con-artist allows a repressed resentment of the Mainland Other to surface.[69]

However, as Mr. Chu is the one who gets himself into trouble by proactively involving himself in this symbolic sexual encounter (and later, real sex trade) with Tong Tong, his subsequent loss of money to Tong Tong as the blackmail payment and his accidental murder of his helper cannot elicit much sympathy among the audiences. Conversely, the director probably suggests that Tong Tong's hoax and looming control over the sexual desires of these men can only be made possible when these men have to be corrupted and sexually objectify Tong Tong in the first place. This thus contravenes and problematizes the usual animosities that are hurled against Mainland women (who, in recent years, also embody Mainlanders in general) in Hong Kong.[70] In blaming the seductress of her wickedness without also checking their own faults, these men disclose their patriarchal ideology and selfishness. If the act of committing fault helps to define what the *Other* (the wrong-doers) and the *Self* (human being of integrity and righteousness) are, the definition of *Self* as opposed to the *Other* would become indefinite in this film.

On the geopolitical level, the red flag signifying the national flag of China and the regional flag of Hong Kong after the Handover is too obvious. Gan reads it as a suggestion that 'despite the gulf between the rich and the poor, between mainland China and Hong Kong, connection and

communication between the two are possible'.[71] Gan's argument is valid on the visual level but not necessary on the audible level in this film. Geopolitical communication represented here is partial and delayed. Hence, the communication between Hong Kong (as represented by the men in Tai Hom Village) and China (as represented by Tong Tong), which is made 'visible' by the red flag to eliminate the feelings of otherness for each other, can be read as an illusion.

3.3.1.2.2. White Flag

Waving a white flag typically signals surrender. Yet Chan gives another twist to conventional flag signals when a white flag is waved in the film.

It happens after all the male protagonists have noticed Tong Tong's trick. They plan to gain brutal revenge on her. Chan makes Tiny the hero by portraying him to run around on the rooftop of all the surrounding zinc huts, and to hold a bed linen-turned-white flag written with a large 'Run' in red to signal Tong Tong to stay away from Keung's and Ming's vengeance (Stills 61, 62). A series of long shots and deep focus mostly with an offscreen point of view follows this little hero around. Tiny is given the status resembling the ultimate hero, even though he is engulfed by the huts built in a disorderly fashion in the mise-en-scène, and intimidated by his father's disapproval. Accompanied by Cantonese operatic music with a heavy and rapid, percussive rhythm usually extolling the advent of important events or the centre stage of important characters in traditional Cantonese opera, this scene is dramatic and humorous.

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Still 61　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　**Still 62**

Stills 61, 62: Tiny is shown running around on top of the jumble of zinc huts to signal Tong Tong to go. Symbolically, he is also signalling directly to the audiences to be awakened from their self-imposed, yielding, and less-privileged situations.

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Still 63: Tiny is the ultimate hero standing dauntlessly in front of the overwhelming Plaza Hollywood / domination.

While resonating to the signalling game that Tong Tong and Tiny (and Mr. Chu) play earlier in the film, this scene is perhaps the most liberating and thereby subversive in the static lives of these men in Tai Hom Village. Unlike his elder brother Ming or Keung who conform to their current situations under the vehement neighbour (Plaza Hollywood signifying the world beyond their reach), Tiny is more courageous. He stands fearlessly with strong determination in front of this 'dominant' *Other* (Plaza Hollywood / domination) (Still 63). His image can refer intertextually to Cheung in *Little Cheung* and Fan in *Durian Durian*.

If we consider this white flag scene as aligning with Chan's use of Tai Hom neighbourhood to symbolize Hong Kong, then what the director is trying to tell Hong Kongers (especially those

who are or think they are being marginalized socio-politically) in this scene is vociferously clear: The white flag is not a surrender.

Local critic Longtin reads this scene as Chan's warning for those (Hong Kong) Chinese who do not want to stay to run away.[72] Given Chan's directorial intent in using this film to visualize those socially abject and the way they deal with their static, marginal lives in Hong Kong, I argue that this white flag scene is not just a warning but a vivification for the *Othered* and the self-*Othered* people. Only when they can and are willing to shed their *Othered* and self-*Other* status can they truly become and be who they are (*Self*).

Hence, while critics such as Longtin who is concerned with the negative impact of the post-Handover context on Hong Kong(ers), and Gan who opines rather optimistically on the possible connections between Hong Kong and China after 1997, my argument for Internet access and flag signalling demonstrates one more level of concern as represented in this film. That is, there are still certain intrinsic areas of Hong Kongers that need to be taken care of, when this group of ethnic Chinese are embracing themselves and the uniqueness of the others amidst the historical, social, cultural, and political transition. Just as the ambiguous, 'androgynous' gender roles assumed by different characters in this film (that is, men as weak and de-masculinized versus women as powerful and dominant), the *Self/Other* at work in the formation of identity during transition (as articulated in this film through Internet communication and flag signals) can be read as 'androgynous'. This becomes evident when the quality of *Other* is found within *Self*, and vice versa. This 'cultural androgyny' of the *Self/Other* gives a unique sense to the transforming identity as much as interminably delaying its full transformation.

3.4. Cinematic *Self* and/or *Other* Representation: Summary

Ordinary Heroes, *Made in Hong Kong*, and *Hollywood Hong Kong* narrate the stories of social underdogs in Hong Kong. By spotlighting the underachieved protagonists and *self-izing* their otherness, both directors Hui and Chan effectively represent the blurred demarcation between what is supposed to be *Self* and the *Other*. This results in an interminable delay in the selfhood articulation in films.

Ordinary Heroes tells the lives of a group of neglected, social activists who were active in the socio-political scene in Hong Kong between the 1970s and the 1990s. The director uses fake, televised images to visualize them. In so doing, however, the director inevitably further fixes them in their *othered* position. *Made in Hong Kong* gives a group of lowly educated and unemployed youths an opportunity to speak their minds, yet only through inoperative televisions and suicide letters. Ironically, they can only be understood after they are dead. These two films may risk fastening these social underdogs to their *othered* positions with regard to the hierarchy of *Self* and the *Other*. *Hollywood Hong Kong* problematizes such hierarchy and dichotomy of *Self* and the *Other* by adding *othered* qualities to *Self* and *self-ized* qualities to the *Other* in its story of the neighbourhood of Tai Hom Village. This is made evident by the protagonists' active Internet use and their flag signalling game. In this way, the director creates a 'cultural androgyny' of *Self/Other* that results in another kind of delay of self-evolvement, as represented in film.

4. INSIGHTS INTO HONG KONGERS' IDENTITY QUEST DURING TRANSITION:

INTERMINABLENESS

Ordinary Heroes, *Made in Hong Kong*, and *Hollywood Hong Kong* offer us exemplars of people refusing to be homogenized as a mass of the *Other*. They give visibility and speaking opportunities to protagonists who can be treated as representatives of certain underrepresented, social groups in Hong Kong. As I have suggested, there are some intrinsic ambiguities of *Self /* the *Other* in what they represent, as amplified dramatically by different kinds of mass media seen on-screen. As such, ambiguities of *Self /* the *Other* may cause an interminable delay in the selfhood articulation, while self is not yet fully transformed from one stage to another (as in diagram 4). The effect on Hong Kongers' sense of being is thus inspiring.

In this section, I will undertake to estimate the kind of effect that may arise if such interminableness in identity transformation is caused by the confusion and inarticulacy of its *Self* and/or the *Other* status. I will argue that the importance lies more with how these ethnic Chinese in Hong Kong deal with the situations tactically and psychologically at that particular moment before any resettlement of their sense of self, than with how their selfhood would become.

Let me return to diagram 4 to see what the part of interminably 'becoming' of identity transformation will signify. I speculate the implications on two fronts. The first pinpoints the techniques that people could possibly adopt / not adopt for exigency, and Chow's tactics of intervention is inspiring in this regard. Chow's original idea is to encourage people such as Hong Kongers to negotiate a space/place in an interstitial terrain where they can develop their foothold (a *Self*) not abruptly but gradually in between cultures, precisely due to the fact that they have no solidified culture and would be perpetually *othered* by the 'dominant' *Others*. Chow's idea could

be read as a way for people to counter-*other*, and hence, *self-ize* themselves in such an interstitial region. The way, in which the discussed films allow the underrepresented social groups to re-exist in the collective imagination of Hong Kong society, could be regarded as such kinds of tactics. *Ordinary Heroes* helps record the forgotten lives of the social activists and preserve that part of local history that does not go into the official history book. *Made in Hong Kong*'s uncanniness may reflect the unwillingness of Hong Kong in facing changes. Even though I have argued that the protagonists are in effect still the *othered*, certain aspects of Hong Kong have already been frozen and cherished. *Hollywood Hong Kong* also preserves forever Tai Hom Village and its affairs in Hong Kong's film history when circumstances do not allow the village to exist anymore in reality. We might compare the villagers' struggles with Hong Kongers at large in facing its 'dominant' *Others* during Hong Kong's historical transition.

Another front is a matter of adjusting one's perspective on the psychological level. This idea goes along with my discussion of 'cultural androgyny'. That is, being *othered* is not necessarily displeasing and being *Self* is not necessarily gratifying. They may just mean the same, dependent on situations as well as how one would like to see oneself and be seen by others.

As we learn from Hall: 'diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference'.[73] By the time these tactical and psychological adjustments are made, whether people are still interminably adjusting their status of *Self* and/or the *Other* would probably not be an issue anymore.

5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examined another possible characteristic found in identity during transition – the interminable delay in selfhood. My study in the past two chapters (which was built on my arguments for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness') prompted me to look into the relationship between *Self* and the *Other*. My discussions on their ambiguous connection led me to conclude theirs as a paradoxical relationship instead of a straightforward hierarchy. Such an association would bring along the interminableness in the transitional identity.

I thereby elaborated on my point by closely examining three post-Handover Hong Kong films, namely *Ordinary Heroes*, *Made in Hong Kong*, and *Hollywood Hong Kong*. *Ordinary Heroes* tells the story of several social activists who were active between the 1970s and 1990s. *Made in Hong Kong* draws our attention to a group of lowly educated and unemployed adolescents. They are neglected by their families and society. *Hollywood Hong Kong* brings us the story concerning a group of male residents in Tai Hom Village and a mysterious Mainland prostitute. Yet it is hard to say who is *Self* and the *Other* in their cases, as the demarcation is blurred because of their traits.

My discussion focused on the directors' use of diegetic communication media to highlight these forgotten people's self-worth. However, my study showed that these communication channels are problematic and double-edged. *Ordinary Heroes* uses fake, televised images to give the social activists the opportunity to speak to the public and to be seen, yet also confine them to the *othered* position. *Made in Hong Kong* gives the protagonists inoperative televisions and suicide letter, the latter of which turns out to be the protagonists' posthumous speech to this world. It

does not help them much when they are alive. *Hollywood Hong Kong* deploys the Internet to expand infinitely the virtual neighbourhood of Tai Hom Village. Flag signals are used by those who do not go online. Yet, both kinds of communication media prove later to be means for the con-artist / prostitute to reach the men there while also exposing their faults. I concluded my discussion by suggesting that it is more important for those involved in the interminable delay of selfhood to re-adjust themselves tactically and psychologically than to worry about where their self-reinvention will head towards.

NOTES

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[6] Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics', p. 95; italics in original.
[7] Derrida, 'Différance', p. 13; italics in original.
[8] Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 145; italics in original.
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[17] Ibid., p. 96.
[18] Sam Ho, 'As Time Goes By: Ann Hui's *Ordinary Heroes*', in *Hong Kong Panorama 98-99*, The 23rd Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 18-19 (p. 18).
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[20] Ibid., p. 29; Kong Kam Yoke, 'Ann Hui: For the Underdogs', *Cinemaya*, 45 (Autumn 1999), 17-19 (p. 18).
[21] Hui, '*Ordinary Heroes*', pp. 89-90.

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[23] Ibid., p. 122.

[24] Longtin, *Hou Jiuqi Yu Xianggang Dianying / Post-97 and Hong Kong Cinema* (in Chinese) (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Critics Society, 2003), pp. 136-137.

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[26] Hui, '*Ordinary Heroes*', p. 93.

[27] Ho, 'As Time Goes By', p. 18.

[28] Sam Ho, 'Two or Three Things I Know about Ann', *Hong Kong Panorama 98-99*, The 23rd Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Provisional Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1999), p. 20.

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[37] Kong, 'Ann Hui', p. 18.

[38] Hui, '*As Time Goes By*', p. 33.

[39] Chow, 'Between Colonizers', p. 153.

[40] Berry, 'Fruit Chan', p. 467.

[41] Ibid.

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[61] Longtin*, Post-97 and Hong Kong Cinema*, pp. 148-149.

[62] Berry, 'Fruit Chan', p. 477.

[63] *Hollywood in Hong Kong*, *City Entertainment*, 41.

[64] Bhabha, 'How Newness Enters the World', p. 219.

[65] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 195; italics in original.

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CONCLUSION:

SELF TRANSFORMED, TRANSFORMING, OR TO BE TRANSFORMED?

This thesis has shown that Hong Kongers' quest for identity during the transition of sovereignty transfer was not easy. Such a transition has required some elaborations, as it has meant different thing to different parties involved. From the authority's point of view (for example, the Mainland Chinese, the British, and the Hong Kong governments), the Handover transition was equivalent to the overnight change of governance from the British to the Chinese, which happened to Hong Kong at midnight of 30 June 1997. Such political changeover was expected to be as definite and smooth as possible. This official 'transition' was, however, not equal to the one that ordinary people have undergone in their daily lives under the 'one country, two systems' principle as stipulated in Basic Law. To be more specific, the sovereignty transition that people have lived (and are possibly still undergoing) has embraced both the official Handover transition day and the society's off-the-record experiences (for example, thinking, feelings, emotions, behaviours, decisions, adjustments and so on) during a transitional state/stage. It started at the moment when the general public was informed in 1982 of the Handover and would last until the point when Hong Kong society is completely re-sinicized in practical manner and on an ideological level. Yet when and how such process is going to complete is still uncertain. It falls beyond the immediate frame of reference of this research, which has covered a twenty-year period between 1982 and 2002 to probe the Handover effects on Hong Kong Chinese in film before and after the sovereignty transfer took place.

Due to a lack of cultural/national centrality (related to Derrida's ideas; see diagrams 1.1., 1.2. and 1.5.) under the impact of British colonization, Hong Kong as what it is nowadays remains a place/ society without a clearly defined origin. Hong Kong's truncated history means that its

origin cannot be the same as that of the People's Republic of China (its new ruler after the Handover) or other Chinese communities, even though 98% of the Hong Kong population are Chinese descendents. Should Hong Kong's origin be traced back to the ancient Chinese civilization on the Mainland in prehistoric times more than four thousand years ago? Or, should Hong Kong's origin be colonialism and its day of birth be the day when Hong Kong started to become a British Crown colony in 1842, because it is basically the colonization that gave birth to today's Hong Kong? This question of origin in turn has made the issue of cultural/national centrality of Hong Kong thornier. It is still controversial up to these days.

As a result, Hong Kong was subjected to the unpredictable influences of countless variables that arose in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres, within and beyond Hong Kong society during the period of the Handover transition. Simultaneously, Hong Kong being one of the world's metropolises today has also had significant influences on those nations and cultures that it has been in contact with (related to Bhabha's concepts; see diagram 1.3.). Accordingly, what Hong Kongers demonstrated during the evolutionary state/stage of their selfhood in the midst of the Handover transition (related to Hall's interpretations; see diagrams 1.4., 2, 3, and 4) were changeable responses to the volatile development and impacts of these contextual factors.

The existing scholarship of Hong Kong cinema, which has mostly considered the Handover effects and read the 1997-related allegory in film analysis, may have noticed Hong Kongers' unique yet oscillating responses to the contextual changes over the transition time span. However, most of the researchers set their research period up to 1997 and could not see the post-1997 evolvement of Hong Kongers' identity as represented in film. They tended to cluster their discussions around those topics that have already been widely written, while not paying enough attention to the nuances in Hong Kongers' self-assertion through film. For example, Teo's *Hong*

Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions produces an encyclopaedic text on the history of Hong Kong cinema since its outset about a hundred years ago. Underneath Teo's historical analysis is a strong Chinese nationalist sense, which may not be able to explain completely why Hong Kong Chinese's attitude to 'China' fluctuates widely among different films. The same may be said about Lu's edited volume *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, though Lu's reading of the transnationalization of Chinese films tends to homogenize all Chinese-language cinematic practices under one grand narrative – the nation-building of China. In this respect, Hong Kongers' self-articulation in film is understood allegorically as a minority endeavour within the nation of China.

Does a transnational perspective work for analysing Hong Kongers' identity in film during transition? By reducing the weight of 'China' on Hong Kong films, both anthologies edited by Fu and Desser, and Yau illustrate that something is still left unanswered about Hong Kongers' selfhood construction in a globalized environment. While Fu and Desser's book incorporates essays that attempt to bypass the delimitation of Chinese national boundaries in investigating different aspects of Hong Kong cinema, the anthology as a whole does not go too far as to consider the impact of Hong Kongers' possible diasporic self-awareness on themselves. Whether they are or are not thinking of themselves as parts of the Chinese diaspora makes a difference in defining themselves and representing who they are, as opposed to other Chinese communities in film. This is precisely something that many Hong Kong filmmakers have consciously yet subtly been doing since the 1980s. For instance, many Hong Kong films may consist of unnecessary mention of Hong Kong-only landmarks and crowded areas, and they use slang unintelligible to other Chinese communities if there are no subtitles to decode them. As for Yau's book, transnationalism and transcultural tendency could mean bringing and viewing Hong Kong cinema on a par with Hollywood. This view is valid as long as it is about the world's order of flow and

exchanges between cinematic practices. Yet if the transnationalism is regarded as American-driven, like what Yau has emphasized, the problems of homogenizing the 'Others' under the big canopy of the USA would come along. Such a homogeneity tendency may ignore even the least bit of socio-cultural traits of the world cinemas, such as Hong Kong films, in defining themselves and what / who they represent in a highly globalized world.

Nevertheless, these studies are invaluable no matter whether they have any imperfections, as they form the body of scholarly research that looks seriously into Hong Kong's cinematic tradition previously neglected. They help boost the interest and the fascination for other researchers to study more about Hong Kong films and their concerns. Simultaneously, those undeveloped and underdeveloped areas in Hong Kong cinema studies, especially with reference to the Handover effects, become pointers for more recent research, such as this one.

Learning from their experiences, I have thus designed this study of Hong Kongers' cinematic representations in such a way that all the eight closely-examined films should meet three criteria, which reflect the research opportunities opened up by the existing Hong Kong film scholarship and the alternative insights my investigations can offer to their findings. In chronological order, these films are *Boat People* (Hui, 1982), *Song of the Exile* (Hui, 1990), *Days of Being Wild* (Wong, 1990), *Happy Together* (Wong, 1997), *Made in Hong Kong* (Chan, 1997), *Ordinary Heroes* (Hui, 1999), *Durian Durian* (Chan, 2000), and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (Chan, 2002). The first criterion they need to meet is that these films should be set and made in the past several decades of Hong Kong, and some of them should be made before 1997 while the other after 1997. Secondly, their narratives should be about the everyday lives of ordinary people (or their allegorical representatives) residing in Hong Kong. Thirdly, their main characters should display

cultural/ethnic Chinese characteristics while having a transnational/transcultural self-awareness and outlook.

In order to reflect in particular this last criterion that has served as the main driving force of this research, I have highlighted throughout this thesis two important elements in Hong Kong Chinese's identity, namely their situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness'. In essence, Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness refers to the fluctuating connectedness of this group of ethic Chinese with its supposed motherland, China. Although the geopolitical dimension of the idea of situational, diasporic consciousness renders China as the primary frame of reference for Hong Kong Chinese, it is far from sinocentric. This is because this idea also takes into consideration the roles of important agents, such as British colonization, and the continuous and active interactions between Hong Kong and other modern nation-states and cultures. Hong Kong Chinese's diasporic consciousness, as I have argued, changes alongside the prevailing circumstances, precisely because this group of Chinese are aware that they (or their ancestors) were once from Mainland China, but the local / global specificities in Hong Kong have made it hard for them to enshrine China *only* in their lives.

Similar conditions have developed for Hong Kongers' 'Chineseness', which is supposed to be the qualities for people who were born Chinese. Yet on the other hand, 'Chineseness' can also be the (self-)imposed restriction and definition for Chinese descendents. This is most obvious in cases of those third or fourth generations of Chinese immigrants to the West, where these Chinese descendents know nothing about Chinese traditions, languages, cultures or even values. On another side of the coin, 'Chineseness' could be exploited as a segregation and self-conceit tool for ethnic Chinese to 'other' their counterparts from other countries, cultures, and races. Likewise, 'Chineseness' as both a signification system and a signifier can easily cause

segregation and conflicts between different Chinese dialectic or sub-cultural communities, just as the issues between Mainland and Hong Kong Chinese people, and between Hong Kong Shanghainese and Hong Kong Cantonese communities. These separate groups may each embrace some forms of 'Chineseness', which may have already transformed due to the impacts of their situatedness under specific circumstances. This is why 'Chineseness' as a cultural trait for identification purposes should be handled cautiously yet flexibly.

Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' therefore have determined to a great extent how Hong Kongers have constructed their selfhood in response to the contextual influences during transition. These two identity features have formed in this research two main threads, around which my arguments have developed. I have sought to find new research angles to read Hong Kong films made during the Handover transition, and to obtain new insights into what and how Hong Kong Chinese reinvent themselves in and through film.

Meanwhile, although the changeable nature of Hong Kongers' selfhood development during the Handover transition era is hard to grasp, there are still peculiarities (for example, alterability, indeterminacy and interminableness) that help depict Hong Kongers' identity during that period/state/stage. I have thus undertaken in this research to trace such a search for selfhood, as it is reflected in contemporary Hong Kong cinema produced between 1982 and 2002. This period of twenty years signifies the pre-Handover transition and the immediate post-Handover transition that Hong Kong Chinese have experienced. Comparisons and contrasts have also been made to demonstrate how people came to terms with the environment in different states/stages of transition.

The structure of this thesis was thus built for special purposes. The introduction has helped to locate where this current research would be within the field of Hong Kong film studies. Through reconsidering the main aims and underlying principles of existing research, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the key work on Hong Kong cinema with special regard to the 1997-related analyses, I have identified three major undeveloped / underdeveloped areas of concern in the field. They were then developed into the criteria for my choice of those eight Hong Kong films to test out my arguments.

Thereafter, there were two main parts in this thesis functioning differently, yet they were closely related with each other and to the field of Hong Kong film studies at large. Part I, consisting of Chapter 1, was the intellectual platform where the theoretical underpinnings and inspiration for this research were found. The first part of my discussions has focused on the need to utilize prominent aspects of the theoretical ideas of Derrida, Bhabha and Hall, and the experiences of Ang, Chow and Abbas, in establishing my case for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness', when Hong Kongers have not had a cultural/national centrality. As such, these theoretical ideas have justified my arguments to look deeply into the identity traits of Hong Kongers before analyzing their identity quest in film. This first part segued into the second level of revisiting the existing Hong Kong cinema scholarship in the second part of Chapter 1, along the two lines of my arguments. This has helped to underscore the contribution of my study in discovering new angles for re-interpreting cinematic representations of identity quest in contemporary Hong Kong films. Naficy's 'accented cinema' paradigm has formed the backbone of the third part of Chapter 1. It has given my study of Hong Kong films a good starting point, as I contended that contemporary Hong Kong cinema is an *almost* case of 'accented cinema' because of their mutual urgency to survive – Hong Kong films

for commercial survival and 'accented cinema' for geopolitical survival – and to reach their target audiences.

Part II of this thesis consisted of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and was where I have tested out my arguments with film examples. I have elaborated my cases respectively on the alterability, indeterminacy and interminableness of Hong Kongers' identity during transition, by critically reading the filmic text of those eight Hong Kong films I have chosen for this purpose. I have shown that these films were related to the 'accented cinema' model in terms of themes, narrative structures, characters and characterization, visual styles, and so on. My textual analysis of these films was informed by what had happened in the society around the time when these films were made.

In supporting my case for the alterability of identity (Chapter 2), which was connected with Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness in this study, I have examined the diegetic, physical journeys and symbolic journeying via the narrative structures in three pre-Handover Hong Kong films. These were Hui's *Song of the Exile* (1990), and Wong's *Days of Being Wild* (1990) and *Happy Together* (1997). While *Song of the Exile* employs fourteen flashbacks to propel the plot mainly from the perspective of the female lead, *Days of Being Wild* multiplies the perspectives of the film by allowing the protagonists to speak their minds individually and guide us through their individual stories in different episodes. *Happy Together* has a seemingly immobile narrative structure due to the repetitious details in the protagonists' exilic lives. Yet it is also because of this compact, spiral structure that the protagonists (and the audiences) treasure the freedom of choosing their routes through life at the end. Cinematic journeys and journeying in these films thus reveal a kind of 'safety valve', which represents the state/stage where Hong Kongers have changed their vantage points during the self-transformation process (see diagram 2).

Nevertheless, their transitional identity would also become incessantly alterable, as long as their journeys (which would include physical, emotional and/or psychological journeys) continue.

As for my discussion on the indeterminacy of being (Chapter 3), which was concerned with Hong Kongers' transformed 'Chineseness' in this research, I have investigated the deployment of the directors' alter egos in Hui's *Boat People* (1982) made before the Handover, and in Chan's *Durian Durian* (2000) made after the Handover. While *Boat People* mobilizes the Japanese male lead as Hui's alter ego to embody her humanist concerns, *Durian Durian* employs the character of Fan (an illegal child immigrant) to represent the director's worldview whilst the female lead (who is a Mainland prostitute) is the extension to Fan's alter ego. In addition to performing the second self for the directors, these alter egos allow Hong Kongers to introspectively re-examine their 'Chineseness', and consider what it means to be Chinese today through the experiences of other groups of diasporic Chinese. The freeze frame that ends *Boat People*, and the imaginary loop that forms between Fan and Yan in the film, suggest on-screen an indeterminate state/stage during identity transformation (see diagram 3). Such a state/stage in self-modification is important, as it gives people an opportunity to choose the best possible direction for further reinventing themselves.

My argument in Chapter 4 concerning the interminableness of selfhood was built upon my case for Hong Kongers' situational, diasporic consciousness, and transformed 'Chineseness' in investigating the ambiguity between *Self* and the *Other*. I have established that such uncertainty could lead to a 'cultural androgyny' of *Self/Other*, due to the counter-homogenization tendency that in turn leads to an interminable 'becoming' (see diagram 4), which is virtually a perpetual delay in identity construction. In order to illustrate this idea, I have scrutinized the use of various kinds of communication media in the diegesis of three post-Handover Hong Kong films, namely

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Hui's *Ordinary Heroes* (1999), and Chan's *Made in Hong Kong* (1997) and *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2002). While *Ordinary Heroes* deploys self-reflexively the fake, televised images to give visibility to the underrepresented social groups in Hong Kong, yet also confirm their otherness; *Made in Hong Kong* uses inoperative televisions and suicide letters to give the social underdogs the chances to speak, but only after their deaths. *Hollywood Hong Kong* directs our attention to Internet communication and flag signalling to see and hear these socially abject people. However, both communication media are double-edged, as it is presented in the film, and thus may not help much to spotlight these social underdogs. As the situations have not changed under the prevailing socio-political context, how Hong Kongers have dealt with them tactically, and adjusted themselves psychologically to cope with the situations, become more important than what and how their identities would become.

Through these cinematic representations of Hong Kongers' quest for identity during transition related to the Handover, Hong Kong filmmakers have managed to offer snapshots of average Hong Kongers' lives. Needless to say, these filmic images are subject to continuous re-interpretations when different sets of contexts preside. This is likely to lead to the growth of similar research on Hong Kong films, and hopefully, to become a specific area of concern in the field of Hong Kong cinema studies in the future. In view of these potentialities, the self-transformation of Hong Kongers during the Handover-related transition would not be as simple and clear-cut as what the official historical record has registered. Instead of showing the abrupt change of polity, transition might itself become a perpetuating state/stage before those affected people truly enter another stage of life.

Appendix

Bibliography

Filmography

APPENDIX

1. Awards Garnered by the Films under Research

Release Year	Film Title	Award Won	Competition / Film Festival	Awardee
1982	*Boat People*	Best Art Direction Award	2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1983	Tony Au
		Best Director Award	2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1983	Ann Hui
		Best Film Award	2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1983	*Boat People*
		Best New Performer Award	2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1983	Season Ma
		Best Screenplay Award	2nd Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1983	Chiu Tai An-Ping
		No. 8, Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures (of All Time)	24th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 2005	*Boat People*
1990	*Song of the Exile*	Best Film Award	Asia-Pacific Film Festival, Asia, 1990	*Song of the Exile*
1990	*Days of Being Wild*	Best Actor Award	10th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1991	Leslie Cheung
		Best Art Direction Award	10th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1991	William Chang
		Best Cinematography Award	10th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1991	Christopher Doyle
		Best Director Award	10th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1991	Wong Kar-wai
		Best Film Award	10th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1991	*Days of Being Wild*
		No. 3, Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures (of All Time)	24th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 2005	*Days of Being Wild*
1997	*Happy Together*	Best Actor Award	17th Hong Kong Films Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Tony Leung Chiu-wai
		Best Actor Award	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Tony Leung Chiu-wai
		Best Cinematography Award	34th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1997	Christopher Doyle
		Best Cinematography Award	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Christopher Doyle
		Best Director Award	50th Cannes International Film Festival, France, 1997	Wong Kar-wai
		Films of Merit Award	4th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Happy Together*
		No. 89, Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures (of All Time)	24th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 2005	*Happy Together*
		Ten Best Chinese Films Awards	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Happy Together*
1997	*Made in Hong Kong*	Best Director Award	17th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Fruit Chan
		Best Director Award	34th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1997	Fruit Chan
		Best Director Award	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Fruit Chan
		Best Director Award	4th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Fruit Chan

		Best Feature Film Award	Gijon International Film Festival, Spain, 1997	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Best Film Award	17th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Best Film Award	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Best New Performer Award	17th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	Sam Lee
		Best Original Screenplay Award	34th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1997	Fruit Chan
		Best Screenplay Award	Gijon International Film Festival, Spain, 1997	Fruit Chan
		Films of Merit Award	4th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Made in Hong Kong*
		FIPRESCI Awards	Pusan International Film Festival, South Korea, 1997	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Golden Montogolfiere	19th Nantes Three Continents Festival, France, 1997	*Made in Hong Kong*
		No. 36, Best 100 Chinese Motion Pictures (of All Time)	24th Hong Kong Film Awards, Hong Kong, 2005	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Swissair/Crossair Special Prize Award	50th Locarno International Film Festival, Switzerland, 1997	*Made in Hong Kong*
		Ten Best Chinese Films Awards	3rd Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 1998	*Made in Hong Kong*
1999	*Ordinary Heroes*	Best Actor Award	5th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	Anthony Wong
		Best Actress Award	5th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	Rachael Lee
		Best Costume and Make Up Design Award	36th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1999	Sam PUN
		Best Director Award	36th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1999	Ann Hui
		Best Film Award	19th Hong Kong Films Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	*Ordinary Heroes*
		Best Leading Actress Award	36th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1999	Rachael Lee
		Best Picture Award	36th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1999	*Ordinary Heroes*
		Best Production Design Award	36th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 1999	Sam Pun, FUNG Kai-fai
		Films of Merit Award	6th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	*Ordinary Heroes*
		Most Recommended Director Award	Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	Ann Hui
		Most Recommended Film Award	Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	*Ordinary Heroes*
		Ten Best Chinese Films Awards	50th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2000	*Ordinary Heroes*
2000	*Durian Durian*	Best Actress Award	6th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	Qin Hailu
		Best Actress Award	7th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	Qin Hailu
		Best Film Award	7th Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	*Durian, Durian*
		Best Leading Actress Award	38th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2001	Qin Hailu
		Best New Performer	20th Hong Kong Films Awards, Hong	Qin Hailu

		Award	Kong, 2001	
		Best New Performer Award	38th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2001	Qin Hailu
		Best Original Screenplay Award	38th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2001	Fruit Chan
		Best Picture Award	38th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2001	*Durian, Durian*
		Best Screenplay Award	6th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	Fruit Chan
		Best Screenplay Award	20th Hong Kong Films Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	Fruit Chan
		Ten Best Chinese Films	6th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2001	*Durian, Durian*
2002	*Hollywood Hong Kong*	Best Costume and Make Up Design Award	39th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2002	Jessie DAI
		Best Director Award	39th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2002	Fruit Chan
		Best Script Award	9th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 2003	Fruit Chan
		Best Sound Effects Award	39th Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan, 2002	Cuson LIU
		Films of Merit	9th Hong Kong Film Critics Society Awards, Hong Kong, 2003	*Hollywood Hong Kong*
		Most Recommended Director Award	Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild Awards, Hong Kong, 2002	Fruit Chan
		Most Recommended Film Award	Hong Kong Film Directors' Guild Awards, Hong Kong, 2002	*Hollywood Hong Kong*
		NETPAC Award for Best Asian Film Award	Cinemanila International Film Festival, The Philippines, 2002	*Hollywood Hong Kong*
		Ten Best Chinese Films	8th Golden Bauhinia Awards, Hong Kong, 2003	*Hollywood Hong Kong*

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  <http://imdb.com/>**

1. **Full Credits of those Hong Kong Films Closely Examined in this Thesis (in Order of Dates/Year of Release)**

Touben Nuhai / Boat People

Director:	Ann Hui
Producer:	Miranda Yang
Screenplay:	Chiu Tai An-Ping (aka Qiu Dai Anping)
Photography / Cinematography:	David CHUNG, WONG Chung-kay
Art Direction	Tony Au
Editing:	Kin Kin
Music:	LAW Wing-fai
Main Cast:	Akutagawa (George Lam), Cam (Season Ma), To Minh (Andy Lau), Madam (Cora Miao)
Production Company:	Bluebird Movie (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	111 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	22 October 1982 – 3 December 1982; 1992 (exact dates not available)

Ketu Qiuhen / Song of the Exile

Director:	Ann Hui
Producer:	CHOU Nai-chung, LIN Dengfei
Screenplay:	Wu Nien-jen
Photography / Cinematography:	ZHONG Zhiwen
Art Direction	YEE Chung-man
Editing:	WONG Yee-shun
Music:	CHEN Yang
Cast:	Hueyin (Maggie Cheung), Aiko (Lu Hsiao-fen)
Production Company:	Cos Group (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	100 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	27 April 1990 – 16 May 1990

A Fei Zhengzhuan / Days of Being Wild

Director:	Wong Kar-wai
Producer:	Rover TANG

Screenplay:	Wong Kar-wai
Photography / Cinematography:	Christopher Doyle
Art Direction	William Chang
Editing:	KAI Kit-wai, Patrick TAM
Music:	George LEONG (Arranger)
Cast:	Yuddy (Leslie Cheung), Lizhen (Maggie Cheung), Tide (Andy Lau), Mimi (aka Lulu) (Carina Lau), Zeb (Jacky Cheung), unidentified man (Tony Leung Chiu-wai)
Production Company:	In-Gear (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	94 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	15 December 1990 – 27 December 1990

Chun Guang Zha Xie / Happy Together

Director:	Wong Kar-wai
Producer:	Wong Kar-wai, CHAN Ye-cheng
Screenplay:	Wong Kar-wai
Photography / Cinematography:	Christopher Doyle
Art Direction	William Chang
Editing:	William Chang, WONG Ming-lam
Music:	Danny CHUNG
Cast:	Fai (Tony Leung Chiu-wai), Wing (Leslie Cheung)
Production Company:	Block 2 Pictures (Hong Kong), Jet Tone (Hong Kong), Prénom H (Japan), Seowoo Film (South Korea)
Running Time:	96 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	30 May 1997 – 16 July 1997

Xianggang Zhizao / Made in Hong Kong

Director:	Fruit Chan
Producer:	Andy Lau (Executive Producer), Doris YANG Ziming (Producer), Daniel YU Wai-Kwok (Line Producer)
Screenplay:	Fruit Chan
Photography / Cinematography:	LAM Wah-chuen, O Sing-pui
Art Direction	MA Ki-kwan
Editing:	TIN Sam-fat
Music:	Lam Wah-chuen
Cast:	Moon (Sam Lee), Ping (Neiky Yim), Sylvester (Wenders Li), Susan (Amy Tam)
Production Company:	Nicetop Independent (Hong Kong), Team Work Production House (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	108 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	9 October 1997 – 3 December 1997

Qian Yan Wan Yu / Ordinary Heroes

Director:	Ann Hui
Producer:	Ann Hui
Screenplay:	CHAN Kin-chung
Photography / Cinematography:	Nelson YU (aka YU Lik-wai)
Art Direction	POON Yick-sum
Editing:	KWONG Chi-leung
Music:	CHIU Tsang-hei, Clarence HUI
Cast:	Tung (Lee Kang-sheng), Sow (Rachel Lee), Yau (Tse Kwan-ho), Father Kam (Anthony Wong)
Production Company:	Class (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	128 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	15 April 1999 – 19 May 1999

Liulian Piaopiao / Durian Durian

Director:	Fruit Chan
Producer:	Alain de la Mata (Executive Producer), Jean-Pierre Dionnet (Executive Producer), Vincent Maraval (Executive Producer), Carrie WONG (Producer)
Screenplay:	Fruit Chan, CHAN Wai-keung, ZHI Minsheng
Photography / Cinematography:	Lam Wah-chuen
Art Direction	TIN Muk
Editing:	Tin Sam-fat
Music:	CHU Hing-cheung, Lam Wah-chuen
Cast:	Yan (Qin Hailu), Fan (Mak Wai-fan)
Production Company:	Canal+ (France), Golden Network Asia (Hong Kong), Nicetop Entertainment (Hong Kong)
Running Time:	116 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong:	16 November 2000 – 20 December 2000

Xianggang You Ge He Li Huo / Hollywood Hong Kong

Director:	Fruit Chan
Producer:	Sylvain Bursztejn (Producer), Kumi Kobata (Executive Producer)
Screenplay:	Fruit Chan
Photography / Cinematography:	O Sing-pui
Art Direction	Oliver WONG
Editing:	Tin Sam-fat
Music:	Chu Hing-cheung, Lam Wah-chuen
Cast:	Mr. Chu (Glen Chin), Ming (Ho Sai-man), Tiny (Leung Sze-ping), Keung (Wong You-nam), Tong Tong (Zhou Xun)

Production Company: Capitol Films (UK), Golden Network Asia (Hong Kong),
                             Hakuhodo (Japan), Media Suits (Japan), Movement Pictures
                             (country not available), Nicetop Independent (Hong Kong)
Running Time: 102 minutes
Dates of Release in Hong Kong: 11 July 2002 – 28 August 2002

2. The List of Films Mentioned and/or Discussed in this Thesis (in Alphabetical Order of Original Titles)

2046 (Wong Kar-wai, China / Hong Kong / France / Germany / Italy / Netherlands / USA, 2004)
92 Hei Mei Gui Dui Hei Mei Gui / 92 The Legendary La Rose Noire (Jeffrey Lau, Hong Kong, 1992)
A Fei Zhengzhuan / Days of Being Wild (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1990)
'A' Ji Hua / Project A (Jackie Chan, Hong Kong, 1983)
'A' Ji Hua Xu Ji / Project A II (Jackie Chan, Hong Kong, 1987)
A1 Tou Tiao / A-1: Headline (Gordon Chan and Rico Chung, Hong Kong, 2004)
Ai Zai Biexiang de Jijie / Farewell China (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1990)
Apocalypse Now (Francis Ford Coppola, USA, 1979)
Ba Wang Bie Ji / Farewell My Concubine (Chan Kaige, China / Hong Kong, 1993)
Bai Fa Mo Nü Zhuan / The Bride with White Hair (Ronny Yu, Hong Kong, 1993)
Beiqing Chengshi / A City of Sadness (Hou Hsiao-hsien, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1989)
Biao Jie, Ni Hao Ye! / Her Fatal Ways (Alfred Cheung, Hong Kong, 1991)
Boli Zhi Cheng / City of Glass (Mabel Cheung, Hong Kong, 1998)
Boyz N the Hood (John Singleton, USA, 1991)
Chongqing Senlin / Chungking Express (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1994)
Chuilian Tingzheng / Reign Behind the Curtain (Li Hanxiang, China / Hong Kong, 1983)
Chun Guang Zha Xie / Happy Together (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1997)
Cuoai / Crossings (Evans Chan, Hong Kong, 1994)
Da Nao Guang Chang Long / Finale in Blood (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1993)
Daoma Dan / Peking Opera Blues (Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 1986)
Dayereh / The Circle (Jafar Panahi, Iran / Italy / Switzerland, 2000)
Dendai Liming / Hong Kong 1941 (Leong Po-chih, Hong Kong, 1984)
Deng Hou Dong Jianhua Fa La / From the Queen to the Chief Executive (Herman Yau, Hong Kong, 2001)
Diarios de Motocicleta / The Motorcycle Diaries (Walter Salles, Argentina / Chile / France / Germany / Peru / UK / USA, 2004)
Die Xue Jie Tou / Bullet in the Head (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1990)
Die Xue Shuang Xiong / The Killer (John Woo, Hong Kong / USA, 1989)
Dong Xie Xi Du / Ashes of Time (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong 1994)
Du Shen / God of Gamblers (series) (Jing Wong, Hong Kong, 1989-1991, 1994)
Feng Jie / The Secret (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1979)
Floating Life (Clara Law, Australia, 1996)
Fu Shi Lian Qu / To Liv(e) (Evans Chan, Hong Kong, 1992)
Fu Zi Qing / Father and Son (Allen Fong, Hong Kong, 1981)
Gaau Ji / Dumplings (Feature version) (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Netherlands, 2004)
Gaau Ji / Dumplings (Short version as part of *San Geng Er / Three … Extremes* (2004)) (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 2004)
Good Bye Lenin! (Wolfgang Becker, Germany, 2003)

Good Morning, Vietnam (Barry Levinson, USA, 1987)

Gu Huo Zi / Young and Dangerous (I-IV) (Andrew Lau, Hong Kong, 1996-2000)

Guling Jie Shaonian Sha Ren Shijian / A Brighter Summer Day (Edward Yang, Taiwan, 1992)

He Ni Zai Yi Qi / Together (Chen Kaige, China / South Korea, 2002)

He Ri Jun Zai Lai / Au Revoir, Mon Amour (Tony Au, Hong Kong, 1991)

Heaven & Earth (Oliver Stone, France / USA, 1993)

Heliu / The River (Tsai Ming-liang, Taiwan, 1997)

Hu Yue De Gushi / The Story of Woo Viet (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1981)

Hua Yang Nian Hua / In the Mood for Love (Wong Kar-wai, France / Hong Kong, 2000)

Huang Fei-hong / Once upon a Time in China (Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 1991)

Huang Fei-hong zhi Xi Yu Xiong Shi / Once Upon a Time in China and America (Sammo Hung, Hong Kong, 1997)

Huang Tu Di / Yellow Earth (Chen Kaige, China, 1984)

Huo Long / The Last Emperor (Li Hanxiang, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1986)

Huoshao Yuanming Yuan / Burning of the Imperial Palace (Li Hanxiang, China / Hong Kong, 1983)

Imitation of Life (Douglas Sirk, USA, 1959)

Irreversible (Gaspar Noé, France, 2002)

Ji Ren Yan Fu / The Deformed (Yueh Feng, Hong Kong, 1960)

Jilao Sishi / A Queer Story (Shu Kei, Hong Kong, 1997)

Jin Ji / Golden Chicken (Samson Chiu, Hong Kong, 2002)

Jin Ye Xing Guang Can Lan / Starry is the Night (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1988)

Jinzhi Yuye / He's a Woman, She's a Man (Peter Chan, Hong Kong, 1994)

Ju Dou (Yang Fengliang and Zhang Yimou, China / Japan, 1990)

Jurassic Park (Steven Spielberg, USA, 1993)

Ke Lian Tian Xia Fu Mu Xin / The Great Devotion (Chor Yuen, Hong Kong, 1960)

Ketu Qiuhen / Song of the Exile (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1990)

Kong Bu Ji / The Intruder (Sammy Tsang, Hong Kong, 1997)

L'Appartement / The Apartment (Gilles Mimouni, France / Italy / Spain, 1996)

L'Intrus / The Intruder (Claire Denis, France, 2004)

La Haine / Hate (Mathieu Kassovitz, France, 1995)

Lakposhtha Hâm Parvaz Mikonand / Turtles Can Fly (Bahman Ghobadi, France / Iran / Iraq, 2004)

Lan Yu (Stanley Kwan, China / Hong Kong, 2001)

Les Quatre Cents Coups / The 400 Blows (François Truffaut, France, 1959)

Lilja 4-ever (Lukas Moodysson, Denmark / Sweden, 2002)

Liulian Piaopiao / Durian Durian (Fruit Chan, China / France / Hong Kong, 2000)

Los Olvidados / The Young and the Damned (Luis Buñuel, Mexico, 1950)

Mangjing / Blind Shaft (Li Yang, China / Germany / Hong Kong, 2003)

Meiguo Xin / Just Like Weather (Allen Fong, Hong Kong, 1986)

Nan Hai Shisan Lang / The Mad Phoenix (Clifton Ko, Hong Kong, 1997)

Nanook of the North (Robert Flaherty, USA, 1922)

Ônibus 174 / Bus 174 (José Padilha and Felipe Lacerda, Brazil, 2002)

Orlando (Sally Potter, Italy / Netherlands / Russia / UK, 1992)

Orphans of the Storm (D.W. Griffith, USA, 1921)

Osama (Siddiq Barmak, Afghanistan / Iran / Ireland / Japan / Netherlands, 2003)

Pan Jin Lian Zhi Qian Shi Jin Sheng / The Reincarnation of Golden Lotus (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1989)

Platoon (Oliver Stone, USA, 1986)

Ponette (Jacques Doillon, France, 1996)

Qian Yan Wan Yu / Ordinary Heroes (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1999)

Qiang Wang / Double Tap (Law Chi-leung, China / Hong Kong, 2000)

Qin Yong / A Terracotta Warrior (Ching Siu-tung, Hong Kong, 1989)

Qing Cheng Zhi Lian / Love in a Fallen City (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1984)

Qiu Tian de Tonghua / An Autumn' s Tale (Mabel Cheung, Hong Kong, 1987)

Qiuyue / Autumn Moon (Clara Law, Hong Kong / Japan, 1992)

Qu Nian Yan Hua Te Bie Duo / The Longest Summer (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1998)

Qu Ri Ku Duo / As Time Goes By (Ann Hui, Hong Kong / Taiwan, 1997)

Rashômon / Rashomon (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1950)

Rebel without a Cause (Nicholas Ray, USA, 1955)

Ren Min Gong Che / Public Toilet (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Japan / South Korea, 2002)

Ruan Lingyu / Centre Stage (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1992)

Russkiy Kovcheg / Russian Ark (Aleksandr Sokurov, Germany / Russia, 2002)

Salaam Bombay! (Mira Nair, France / India / UK, 1988)

San Geng Er / Three … Extremes (Fruit Chan / Takashi Miike / Chan-wook Park, Hong Kong / Japan / South Korea, 2004)

She Shi Lin Du: Chun Guang Zha Xie / Buenos Aires Zero Degree: The Making of Happy Together (Kwan Pun-leung and Amos Lee, Hong Kong, 1999)

Shenggang Qibing / Long Arm of the Law (Johnny Mak, Hong Kong, 1984)

Shijie / The World (Jia Zhangke, China / France / Japan, 2004)

Sishui Liunian / Homecoming (Yim Ho, China / Hong Kong, 1984)

Smultronstället / Wild Strawberries (Ingmar Bergman, Sweden, 1957)

Szegénylegények / The Round-up (Miklós Jancsó, Hungary, 1966)

Ta'm e Guilass / Taste of Cherry (Abbas Kiarostami, France / Iran, 1997)

Ten (Abbas Kiarostami, France / Iran / USA, 2002)

Tengoku To Jigoku / High and Low (Akira Kurosawa, Japan, 1963)

The Beautiful Country (Hans Petter Moland, Norway / USA, 2004)

The Deer Hunter (Michael Cimino, USA, 1978)

The Joy Luck Club (Wayne Wang, USA, 1993)

The Killing Fields (Roland Joffé, UK, 1984)

The Pillow Book (Peter Greenaway, France / Luxembourg / Netherlands / UK, 1996)

The Searchers (John Ford, USA, 1956)

The World of Suzie Wong (Richard Quine, UK, 1960)

Tian Mi Mi / Comrades, Almost a Love Story (Peter Chan, Hong Kong, 1996)

Tian Yu / Xiu Xiu: The Sent-down Girl (Joan Chen, Hong Kong / Taiwan / USA, 1998)

To Vlemma Tou Odyssea / Ulysses' Gaze (Theodoros Angelopoulos, France / Germany / Greece / Italy / UK, 1995)

Tong Dang / Gangs (Lawrence Ah Mon, Hong Kong, 1988)

Tou Shao Ya / Stealing the Roasted Duck (Liang Shaobo, China, 1909)

Touben Nuhai / Boat People (Ann Hui, Hong Kong, 1982)

Wang Jiao Ka Men / As Tears Go By (Wong Kar-wai, Hong Kong, 1988)

Welcome to Sarajevo (Michael Winterbottom, UK / USA, 1997)

Wu Shu / Run and Kill (Hin Sing 'Billy' Tang, Hong Kong, 1993)

Wutai Jiemei/ Two Stage Sisters (Xie Jin, China, 1965)

Xianggang Zhizao/ Made in Hong Kong (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong, 1997)

Xiaohai Bu Ben / I Not Stupid (Jack Neo, Singapore, 2002)

Xilu Xiang / Little Cheung (Fruit Chan, Hong Kong / Japan, 1999)

Xin Dong / Tempting Heart (Sylvia Chang, Hong Kong / Japan, 1999)

Xin Nüxing / The New Woman (Cai Chusheng, China, 1934)
Yan Zhi Kou / Rouge (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1987)
Yao Shou Du Shi / The Wicked City (Mak Tai-kit, Hong Kong, 1992)
Yapian Zhanzheng / The Opium War (Xie Jin, China, 1997)
Ying Xiong Ben Se / A Better Tomorrow (John Woo, Hong Kong, 1986)
Ying Xiong Ben Se III Xi Yang Zhi Ge / A Better Tomorrow III: Love and Death in Saigon (Tsui Hark, Hong Kong, 1989)
You Seng / Temptation of a Monk (Clara Law, Hong Kong, 1993)
Yuan Fen / Behind the Yellow Line (Taylor Wong, Hong Kong, 1984)
Yue Kuai Le, Yue Duo Luo / Hold You Tight (Stanley Kwan, Hong Kong, 1997)